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With the Russians in Peace and War

Frederick Arthur Wellesley

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WITH THE RUSSIANS IN PEACE AND WAR

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WITH THE RUSSIANS IN PEACE AND WAR

RECOLLECTIONS OF A MILITARY ATTACHÉ

BY

COLONEL THE HON. F. A. WELLESLEY

FORMERLY BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHÉ IN RUSSIA

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

EVELEIGH NASH

MCMV

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GENERAL TODLEBEN.

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Edinburgh: T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty

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PREFACE

As Russia is now attracting the especial attention of the world, I venture to submit the following pages, in which will be found various anecdotes concerning that country both in peace and war, with the hope that they may be of some slight interest to any who may do me the honour to read them.

F. A. WELLESLEY.

December 1904.

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WITH THE RUSSIANS IN PEACE AND WAR

CHAPTER I

APPOINTMENT

FROM the time that I joined the Guards in the year 1863, my constant ambition was to serve as Military Attaché in some foreign capital.

My father having been for many years British ambassador in Paris, I had frequent opportunities of observing what the duties of a Military Attaché were, and I imagine that I was thus imbued with the desire of obtaining a post of that description. Curiously enough, in the course of a few years I was appointed in that capacity to the British Embassy in St. Petersburg, where I remained until the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. It was quite by chance I heard that the post was vacant, and made application for it.

The First Battalion of the Coldstream Guards, of which I was at the time adjutant, was quartered at the Tower of London in the summer of 1871. In the month of June of that year I had applied for foreign leave in order to go to Paris and visit

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the forts, etc., after the defeat of the Commune and the occupation of the city by the Republican troops. My leave had been granted, but on the morning of the day on which I had arranged to start, my colonel, the Honourable P. Feilding, received a communication from the court to the effect that the Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia, who was then on a visit to England, would come to the Tower on the following day with his staff, and expressing a hope that they should be entertained to luncheon by the officers of the battalion. Colonel Feilding then asked me to postpone my departure to Paris until the next evening, so that I might help to receive the visitors. On the following day the Grand Duke arrived, accompanied by several English officers who were attached to him, as also by many members of his own staff. At luncheon a Russian gentleman who sat next to me asked if I had ever been to Russia, and on my replying that I had not, and that I very much wished some day to have the opportunity of visiting that country, he said laughingly, 'Why do you not come now as Military Attaché? Colonel Blane has recently died, and the appointment is now vacant.'

This was the first intimation I had received of the death of my predecessor in the post which I eventually obtained, but I did not at that moment, of course, think that I should have the slightest chance of obtaining the appointment.

As soon, however, as luncheon was over, and

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our guests had taken their departure, I jumped into a hansom, and proceeded to the Horse Guards, where the offices of the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, then were, and asked to see his equerry, Colonel Macdonald, that popular officer known to everybody in those days as 'Jim Macdonald.' He received me very kindly, and I immediately told him that I hoped he would not think the object of my visit a very impertinent one, but that I had just heard that the post of Military Attaché in St. Petersburg was vacant, and had come to ask whether he thought that an application on my part for the appointment would be favourably entertained. He at first appeared as much amused as astonished at my presumption, and looking out my name in an Army List good-naturedly pointed out that I was a subaltern of seven years' service, adding that the place had just been offered to a general officer who had, however, declined it.

I apologised for having troubled him, and expressed a hope that he would forgive me. I mentioned that I was going that night to Paris to see the effects of the Commune, and was about to take my leave when, again taking up the Army List, he told me to wait a few minutes, and went into the adjoining room, which I knew to be the Duke of Cambridge's office. In about ten minutes he returned, saying that I was much too young for such an appointment, and I then left him. A fortnight later, after my return from

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Paris, I received at the Tower an official letter from the Military Secretary, General Forster, desiring me to attend that afternoon at the Horse Guards, and I must confess to an inward suspicion that his wishing to see me was not wholly unconnected with the St. Petersburg appointment; nor was my suspicion unfounded, for, as soon as I saw General Forster at the Horse Guards, he told me that there was a question of sending me to St. Petersburg, that the Duke of Cambridge would come to his office shortly, and desired to see me on the subject. Soon afterwards the Duke of Cambridge arrived, and sent for me into his office overlooking the Horse Guards Parade. His Royal Highness was most kind, and said that if I thought I could do the work he would recommend me for the appointment. I replied that I thought I could, and the matter was then decided. The Duke sent my name in to the Foreign Secretary, by whom these appointments are nominally made, and I shortly afterwards received a note from Lord Granville, who was then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, saying that he was pleased to appoint me. As soon as my name appeared in the Gazette, questions on the subject were asked in the House of Commons, and I was desired by Lord Granville to proceed to my post at once. This was at the commencement of the month of August.

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CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL IN RUSSIA

WHEN I arrived at St. Petersburg I found that the manœuvres had commenced, and that the Emperor, who always attended them in person, had his headquarters at Ropsha, one of the Imperial palaces in the vicinity of the capital. His Majesty having been informed of my arrival, I was invited to attend the manœuvres, and on reaching Ropsha was shown to the apartment allotted to me, and on the following morning was summoned to an audience with the Emperor. His Majesty received me and a brother officer, the late Colonel Sir F. A. Graves-Sawle, most graciously, saying a few words of welcome to each of us. The next day we both attended the manœuvres, and were then presented to the Minister of War, General Milutin, and other military officers of high rank.

I should here say that foreign military attachés in St. Petersburg always have the greatest hospitality extended to them at court, and during their attendance at the great camp of Krasnoe-Celo, the camp of instruction which corresponds to our Aldershot, they are received as personal

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guests of the Emperor. Each has a comfortable suite of apartments assigned to him, and an Imperial footman is told off to attend to him. On his arrival at the station to join the camp he is met by a carriage and pair, which are at his disposal during the whole time of his presence there, which is generally from a month to six weeks. The usual routine of life during the training and before the commencement of the great manœuvres is as follows:—

Drive out in the early morning to be present, say, at a cavalry field day, and on arrival mount a charger from the Imperial stables. At the conclusion of the field day drive back to camp. *Déjeuner* with the staff in a large wooden building at 12.30. After this the camp becomes like a city of the dead, as it is the Russian custom to take a siesta at this time. At about five in the evening, drive out again to see perhaps some evolutions of infantry, after which return to camp and dinner in the same building. Later in the evening tea and coffee are also served, and then to bed. The foregoing is the usual humdrum life of the camp. There are, however, times when the monotony of this existence is varied by some special occasion, such as the fête-day of a regiment or other event of a similar nature. The permanent camp of Krasnoe-Celo consists of a long street, on each side of which is a row of picturesque wooden buildings, some of which are occupied by the Staff, and some as mess-houses of

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the different regiments, especially of the cavalry of the guard. In the centre of this street, in a more open place, is situated the great mess-house of the Imperial Staff, a wooden structure in which a thousand people could be accommodated. It must not be forgotten that I am referring to what was the case more than twenty years ago, since which time many changes may, of course, have taken place.

I will here relate a story of camp life in a Russian regiment of cavalry of the guard which will give an insight into the social habits of such a regiment. Shortly after my first arrival at Krasnoe-Celo I was invited to dine at the mess of the Gardes à Cheval, and, truth to tell, it was a terrible ordeal, and one which I should be sorry to be compelled to experience a second time. I had the honour of being the guest of the evening, and was therefore placed next to the colonel, and we sat down about forty to dinner.

Instead of having the wine on the table or handed round, as is the case at our English regimental messes, it was the custom in Russia, at the time of which I am speaking, for each officer to give an order in writing on a small slip of paper for what wine he required. On this occasion dinner had no sooner commenced than the colonel having ordered a bottle of champagne, his example was followed, as far as I could see, by all or very nearly all of the officers present, and when he filled two glasses, handing me one and drinking

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my health with the other, it appeared to be the signal for every one at the table to do the same, and one by one they came up to me, handed me a glass of champagne, at the same time emptying another to my health. I had been told that it would be considered most rude if I did not drain every glass I received to the health of him who brought it me; but there is a limit to everything, and I soon found that I had sufficiently done my duty in that respect, more especially as the champagne they drink in that country is as sweet as it well can be. The result was that on the table in front of me stood a large semicircle of unemptied glasses—much, I imagine, to the delight of the waiters after we had left the room.

Although my dinner miseries were then at an end, worse was yet to come. After coffee and liqueurs had been served we all adjourned to a large verandah, from which steps descended on to a lawn with a background of bushes. Before long a huge silver cauldron was produced, and two young officers were directed by the colonel to throw into it all the fruit left on the mess table. This done, a certain number of bottles of brandy, curaçoa, and sundry other liqueurs were poured on the fruit. To this mixture was then added a limited amount of soda-water, after which a fire was lighted under the cauldron. A silver grid-iron, on which stood a sugar loaf, was then placed over the mouth of the vessel. After a bottle of

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curaçoa had been poured over the sugar the latter was set fire to, and melting, gradually fell in great brown blobs into the cauldron below. As soon as the sugar had all disappeared this hideous mixture was well stirred with long ladles, and the beverage, which they called jonka, was then ready for distribution, and glasses filled with it were handed round. After some of this intoxicating drink had been consumed the regimental singers, to the number of thirty or forty, suddenly emerged from behind the bushes at the far end of the lawn and commenced their wild, weird national songs.

In the course of conversation the colonel or some other officer of the regiment ascertained from me the Christian names both of myself and of my father. My name being Frederick, and that of my father Henry, Russians would call me Feodor Andreitch, meaning 'Frederick the son of Henry.'

This appellation having been surreptitiously conveyed to the leader of the singers, he and his men broke out into a wild dance, at the same time singing a song of praise and welcome into which my name was introduced. Then, as the dance got more wild and furious, and the singing louder, a sudden rush was made up the steps by a few of the singers, led by their chief, and I was seized by them and carried down to the lawn, and there thrown on to a bed of human hands formed by the singers leaning back, and turning

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the palms of their hands upwards. Then at a given signal they threw me with all their strength into the air and, the tallest man holding me tight by the ankles, at the same moment jumped as high as possible, pulling me down again on to the bed of hands in his descent, only to be thrown up and pulled down again and again without cessation for some minutes. This gymnastic exercise, although meant as a compliment, taking place as it did after dinner, champagne, and jonka, was not, as may be imagined, a very pleasant experience.

When at St. Petersburg, the public duties of a military attaché are attendance at all reviews and other great military functions, as well as the weekly guard-mounting parade, when the court is in town during the winter season. This parade, at which the Emperor is always present, is called the Razvod, and takes place in a large riding-school in the centre of the city. It consists of an inspection of a couple of hundred infantry, and various small detachments of cavalry of the guard, at the conclusion of which a certain number of the Emperor's personal escort perform something in the nature of a gymkhana, such as galloping past whilst standing erect in the saddle, shooting at the gallop at pieces of paper on the ground, etc.

I had not been in Russia long before I became aware that in order to be of the slightest use, it was absolutely necessary that I should learn the

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Russian language. If I went to the War Office or to any of the military departments for information, although I was always received with courtesy, I was also invariably referred for an answer to endless ponderous volumes of printed matter which, as I was ignorant of the language, were practically useless to me. Nor could I, without speaking Russian, enter into general conversation with military men on military matters. I therefore set to work to learn the language—not by any means an easy task.

This reminds me of an amusing story told me by the late Mr. Thomas Michell, formerly our Consul in St. Petersburg, and who knew Russian like a native. It appears that in the early sixties a young English gentleman about to undergo his examination for a direct commission in the army, and who had recently travelled for a few weeks in Russia, sent in Russian as a foreign language in which he desired to be examined. He of course thought that as there would be no Russian examiner, he would at least be credited with the minimum of marks allowed for a foreign language. It so happened, however, that Mr. Michell was in London on leave at the time, and he was requested by the Foreign Office to come to the rescue of the Military Education Department in their difficulty by acting as examiner on this occasion. A meeting was therefore arranged in Great George Street between the young candidate and Mr. Michell. The latter arrived first and

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was shown into a waiting-room, where he was soon joined by the candidate, who, ignorant of whom he was addressing, said that he had come to be examined in Russian, of which language he knew nothing. Michell, much amused, informed him that he was to have the pleasure of examining him. An official then entered the room, introduced them, and retired. Michell having ascertained that his victim knew how to say 'Yes' and 'No,' etc., in Russian, thought himself justified in giving a certificate to the effect that Mr. —— had 'a fair practical knowledge of the Russian language'!

One day, when I was home on leave from Russia, I met this gentleman—then an officer in the army—who after asking me how I liked Russia, told me that he had 'passed for the army in that language.' I replied that I knew his examiner.

I took up my appointment just at the time when the German successes in the war of 1870 against France had caused the Emperor and his military advisers to adopt, as far as possible, the system of universal military service, which had proved so successful in Germany.

This system of compulsory military service for all classes of the male population was both unnecessary and unwise when applied to Russia. The old conscription produced quite as many recruits as her army required for its annual contingent, and the ranks were then filled entirely by the peasant class, which knew nothing of Nihilism

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and its doctrines. Not content, however, to leave well alone, it was considered necessary slavishly to follow the example of Germany, whose military system was adopted. This measure not only opened the doors of the army to the discontented, but even compelled them to enter, and they were not slow to avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded them of spreading their revolutionary propaganda, the fruits of which were soon observed, when the entire band of one of the regiments of the guard was broken up owing to the discovery that papers of a seditious and revolutionary character were being sedulously distributed by the bandsmen. Nor does the discipline in the army appear to have improved with time, as will be seen from the following incident:

In the month of May 1881 the Emperor, Alexander III., held his annual spring review of the Imperial Guard and the troops of the St. Petersburg district on the Champ de Mars. On the same afternoon the famous Imperial *ukase* proclaiming His Majesty's intention to uphold the integrity of the autocratic power was made public. This manifesto created a great sensation among all classes, not excepting the guards themselves.

On the evening of the review, a deputation of about thirty officers of a certain regiment of the guard presented themselves in a body to the colonel, and requested him to explain to them the meaning of the Imperial ukase which had just been promulgated. The colonel, much discon-

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certed by such an insubordinate proceeding on the part of his officers, told them confidentially that he believed the ukase to be merely a Government ruse to frighten the Nihilists, and that things would go on pretty much as before. This explanation, however, was not considered satisfactory by the officers of the deputation, who openly told their colonel, that had they been aware, before the review, that such a manifesto was about to appear, they would have refused to go on parade. As soon as the deputation had taken its departure the colonel telegraphed unofficially to General Milutin, who was then Minister of War, and who was staying with the Emperor at the time, reporting the whole circumstance, and leaving it to his discretion as to whether the matter should be made known to the Emperor or not. There is reason to believe that the general considered it inadvisable to mention the matter to His Majesty, and confined himself to directing that the officers should be severely reprimanded and warned of the serious consequences which would ensue should there be any repetition of so gross a case of insubordination. It seems scarcely credible that in autocratic Russia such an offence against military discipline should have been allowed thus to pass by unpunished.

I mention this incident in order to show how deeply the feeling against autocracy had even at that date taken root, and therefore how extra careful the military authorities should have been

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to prevent, as far as possible, the introduction of a revolutionary element into the ranks of the army.

No one could wish to see a finer military spectacle than the review of the Imperial Guard, the four regiments of cuirassiers, headed by the Chevaliers Gardes, being specially splendid. Indeed the Imperial Guard are, as a whole, as magnificent a body of troops as could be found in any army, and the hard work they did at the annual manœuvres without complaining showed of what good, hard material they were composed—so much so that, until the present war in the Far East revealed the Japanese in their true light, I always considered that, after the Turk, the Russian was the best raw material for soldiers, and that both he and the Turk were capable of the maximum of work on the minimum of food, and I have no doubt that, when the history of the Russo-Japanese War is written, the Russian private soldier, as such, will be proved to be as good now as he was then.

The officers of the guard, being of course picked men from the upper ten thousand, who had received an excellent education, were not only extremely smart on parade, but were also well up in their profession, as judged by the standard then existing. In the line regiments, however, things were different, and the poorly paid officers, often quartered in distant villages, had little else to do, especially during the long

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winter months, than play cards or drink with their own men.

The discipline in the army when I was in Russia was of a curious nature, the officers being at times even familiar with their men, and at others most severe. In the Imperial Guard the discipline was quite different to that which obtains in this country, and I have seen officers severely punished for what in our army would not be called even an offence.

I remember once being at a ball in Moscow, given in his house by the Governor-General, old Prince Dolgorouki. It was at the time of the late Duke of Edinburgh's marriage to the Emperor's daughter, and His Majesty and other members of the Imperial family were present. When the time arrived for the cotillon the young men were told where to get chairs for themselves and their partners. One young officer, belonging to the Preobrajensky, or First Regiment of Foot Guards, and who was very short-sighted, having procured a couple of chairs, entered the ballroom somewhat precipitately and, unintentionally of course, touched the Emperor, whom he did not see. He was immediately put under arrest by one of the superior officers of his regiment who happened to be present and who saw the occurrence, and was there and then sent to the guardroom on the opposite side of the square in which the Governor-General's house was situated. I heard the matter discussed by several of his brother

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officers during supper later in the evening, and it was the general opinion among them that it served him right.

On another occasion, at the Razvod or weekly guard-mounting parade in the riding-school, a cavalry officer was placed under arrest and sent to one of the garrison guardrooms on account of a matter equally trivial. At the conclusion of the parade it was the custom for an officer, non-commissioned officer, and private, sent by the different cavalry regiments, to charge past the Emperor. On this occasion the private's horse, being ill, was unable to keep up with the rest. The charge was therefore repeated, with the obvious result that the poor animal showed itself to even less advantage. It appears that an obsolete regulation existed to the effect that each regiment furnishing these men for the parade was to send an extra horse in case of accidents. Although this order had been disregarded for years, the officer of the squadron to which the sick horse belonged was severely punished for having neglected it.

Another time, during the Russo-Turkish War, I was present when a general officer, who was also 'aide-de-camp général' to the Emperor, was spoken to by His Majesty before some two hundred officers, most of them his juniors, in a manner which, fortunately, is inconceivable in this country. It was during the siege of Plevna, and while we were all at breakfast in the large

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mess marquee. It appears that in the morning the Emperor had told this officer to carry despatches or take a message to Bucharest. He immediately went to the Government postmaster and, telling him the orders he had received, asked for a cart to take him to the first post-relay station. The postmaster replied that he was very sorry, that the only horses he had at the station had but that moment come in from a long return journey, and that they would not be ready to start again until two o'clock in the afternoon. The officer therefore came in as usual to breakfast, thus, at any rate, showing how little he thought he was doing wrong. We had scarcely commenced our meal when the Emperor caught sight of him sitting at the far end of the second table, and, calling him by name, said, 'I thought I had told you to go to Bucharest? What do you mean therefore by being here?' The poor officer, white with terror and confusion, stammered out his explanation that there were no horses ready to start; but this, in the Emperor's eyes, was no excuse at all. Pointing to the door of the tent, he cried out in a loud and angry voice, 'Von!' which was as much as to say, 'Out of my sight!' and the poor creature had to leave the tent in this humiliating manner in front of all present. The officer in question was no less a personage than Prince Tchinghiz, lineal descendant of the famous Tchinghiz Khan, and whose territory Russia had been kind enough to absorb.

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I remember a very bad case of violation of discipline which occurred in a regiment of the cavalry of the guard when in camp at Krasnoe-Celo, a few miles from the country house of a gentleman I knew. One of the officers of this regiment, a lieutenant, accepted an invitation to luncheon at the house referred to, and finding himself unexpectedly detailed for duty on the day, instead of remaining in camp, borrowed a corporal's uniform and rode off to fulfil his engagement. On arrival he was quickly informed that a general officer was in the house, on hearing which he attempted to make his escape back to camp. The general, however, having heard of his arrival, and the circumstances attending it, called him back, and at the same time promised not to report him. The fact of an officer obtaining the assistance of a corporal, as well as that of a superior officer, in order to enable him to perpetrate such a breach of discipline, requires no comment, especially as the regiment to which he belonged occupied the same position as that held by the 1st Life Guards in this country.

The following anecdote with regard to Skobeleff, which is very characteristic of the man, even if not true, was related to me by a Russian officer.

In 1871 the Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, then Lieutenant of the Caucasus, sent his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Skobeleff, with a message from Tiflis to the officer commanding the military

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depôt at Krasnovodsk, on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.

This young officer on his arrival, instead of delivering the message with which he had been charged, told the officer in command that he was the bearer of an order from the Grand Duke to the effect that Khiva was to be attacked immediately, and that the necessary preparations were to be made without loss of time. Camels and other transport animals were purchased, and all haste was made with a view to starting the expedition at once.

It so happened, however, that about a fortnight after Skobeleff's departure from Tiflis, the Grand Duke had occasion to send fresh orders to the officer in command at Krasnovodsk, and the chief of the staff at Tiflis was ordered to convey them in person. On his arrival he found the expedition on the point of starting, and was only just in time to stop it.

Skobeleff was dismissed from the Grand Duke's staff and sent to serve in Poland. At the conclusion of this singular anecdote I asked my informant what would have happened to Skobeleff had the Grand Duke's second messenger arrived too late to stop the expedition. 'Well,' replied my friend, who, by the way, was a Russian general, 'if the expedition had succeeded and Khiva been taken, Skobeleff would have received the thanks of the Emperor and the Cross of St. George; whereas, had the column met with

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disaster, he would never have returned. Such is the way in which we do things in Russia.'

I may here recount a similar incident which occurred in the Caucasus in 1859, when, a short time before his capture, Schamyl and his followers retired to their fastness in the mountains, Prince Bariatinsky, the Russian commander, being quite ignorant as to their place of concealment.

It chanced that Colonel Turgoutassoff, who commanded a regiment of infantry at the time, believed that if a certain very steep hill were successfully stormed the search for Schamyl and his bodyguard would be rendered comparatively easy. The colonel then determined to storm with his own regiment the hill which his chief, Prince Bariatinsky, had considered impregnable with all the forces at his disposal, and he persuaded another officer, Colonel Grabbe, to assist him by making a simultaneous attack from the other side of the mountain.

The assaults were successful, and the capture of Schamyl was the result.

Prince Bariatinsky, furious at what these two officers had done on their own responsibility, sent for Turgoutassoff and said, 'Are you aware, sir, that if you had failed I would have had you shot like a dog?' But the colonel merely replied, 'No, Prince, had I failed, I should never have returned.' Both these colonels had risen to the rank of general when I saw them in Russia, and Turgou-

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tassoff had been also rewarded for this exploit by the Cross of St. George.

To return to Skobeleff. When I first knew him he was a tall, very handsome, fair-haired young man. Soon afterwards he was sent to Central Asia, where he remained till the commencement of the war with Turkey. He had been recalled on account of something he had done in those distant regions of which the Government did not approve, and was at the time very much under a cloud. In vain did he apply for employment in the army of invasion; everything was refused.

At last, through the influence of his father, a general on the Grand Duke Nicholas's staff, and to whom the command of a division of Cossacks had been given, he obtained permission to accompany the army, at first, if I remember rightly, on his father's staff. He subsequently distinguished himself in the command of a small force of cavalry, and it is needless to say how he eventually became the hero of the war, and the idol of the Russian people.

Skobeleff was every inch a soldier, and he was more, he was also a diplomatist, and careful not to hide his light under a bushel. When, owing to the real or supposed indiscretion of one of the correspondents, an order was issued forbidding their presence in the front lines, Skobeleff took no notice of it, but continued to receive them with his accustomed hospitality and readiness to

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GENERAL SKOBELEFF.

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To return to Skobeleff. [illegible] him he was a tall, very [illegible] young man. Soon after [illegible] to Central Asia, where [illegible] the commencement of the war [illegible] he had been recalled on [illegible] he had done in those distant [illegible] the Government did not [illegible] the time very much under [illegible] he apply for employment [illegible]; everything was refused.

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give information, and the result was certainly not detrimental to his military reputation. I know for a fact that one of the most graphic descriptions of Skobeleff's splendid attacks against the Turkish redoubts at Plevna in September 1877, and which appeared in one of the London daily papers, was written at his own dictation, the correspondent of the paper having arrived too late to be present at the operations.

Poor Skobeleff did not live long to enjoy his well-deserved honours and the grateful adoration of his countrymen, for he died at Moscow not long after his return from Turkey.

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CHAPTER III

LIFE IN ST. PETERSBURG

No description of the town of St. Petersburg appears necessary, as it has no features peculiar to itself, but is a sort of mixture of all the other principal capitals of Europe.

Social life in St. Petersburg, however, is quite different from anything I have seen elsewhere. This is chiefly attributable to the climate, to which everything must of course be subordinated. During the winter months no sun is seen at all, and there are not more than four or five hours which can be called daylight. As artificial light is practically in use until ten in the morning, and required again at about 3 P.M., the outdoor day for members of society is very much shorter than it is here. The typical life of the Russian well-to-do classes is as follows:—Breakfast at about 12.30, tea at 4, dinner at 6.30; after which, if there are no balls or parties, people generally go either to the theatre or the opera, at the conclusion of which they return home to supper. Although there is very little dining out in our sense of the term, Russians are very hospitable to their intimate friends, who can always come in to

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any meal and take pot-luck without invitation, and you will generally see several vacant places for any casual visitors of this description. In the capital the majority of the people reside in flats. The houses are mostly very large, and built round a yard in which is piled the wood fuel for the winter's consumption. These houses are divided into flats of all sizes and suitable to all means, those on the front commanding very large rents, whereas those at the back or looking into the yard are within the means of the most impecunious. At the gates of these houses will always be found the 'dvorniks,' who act as porters, look after the yard, and sleep on the ground in front of the gates enveloped in their sheepskin coats, which they generally wear both summer and winter. It is these officials who are responsible to the police for the passports of the inmates of the houses, and the secret police greatly rely on these men for assistance in tracing individuals whom they wish to arrest.

The St. Petersburg season is of course in winter, and it is then that the chief court entertainments are given. There are usually three court balls: one for which some three thousand invitations are issued; a smaller one, when only about a thousand people are invited; and a very small one, the invitations to which are limited to officials of high rank, foreign diplomats, and the most fashionable members of society. The first two of these entertainments are given in the Winter Palace, and the

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third in the Hermitage, a palace connected with the Winter Palace, and which contains the National Picture Gallery. The supper is here served in a number of very small rooms, the walls of which are covered with the most lovely pictures. At the biggest of these three balls three thousand people sit down to supper. The smaller ball, to which only one thousand persons are invited, is held in a smaller ballroom than the first, and supper is served in the large ballroom. This was always a beautiful sight, the whole room being turned, as it were, into a garden with trees coming up through the centre of circular tables surrounded by shrubs. The Palace on these occasions was always lighted by thousands of wax candles, which had a most brilliant effect.

Russian houses are always kept at the same temperature both summer and winter. At the end of August or beginning of September every house is furnished with its second, and very often third, windows. These are hermetically fastened, and only one pane of glass in each window is made to open. In the spring the two extra windows are removed, which permits of the opening of the permanent one. The houses are warmed by means of hot air, and the smell of a Russian house thus closed and thus heated can never be forgotten. Owing to the severity of the climate in winter, which necessitates the wearing of heavy furs, it is very difficult to get any exercise at all, and it is rare to meet any lady in society taking a

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constitutional. The only fresh air she gets is in her sledge, in which she generally drives from about two or half-past until four. This want of open-air exercise, added to unlimited indulgence in cigarettes, robs the great majority of Russian women of that healthy look for which our English women are so famous.

A general laziness is apparent in all classes of society, which no doubt is to be attributed in great measure to the climate. If a servant is sent with a message he never walks, but takes a droshki in summer or a sledge in winter, for which his master pays.

In one sense the Russians are extraordinarily hospitable to foreigners, especially if they are travellers with letters of introduction. In such a case they cannot do too much for the visitors—a great deal more than would ever be thought necessary or even suitable in this country. It is not, however, at all the same with regard to resident foreigners, be they diplomatists or simple residents. Just before I went to St. Petersburg things were different, and for some years it had been the fashion to treat foreigners with marked attention. Suddenly, however, this fashion gave way to a general dislike of everything foreign, and it was at this time that the adoption of the Russian language in society commenced. During my stay in Russia, foreigners were rarely invited to anything but court or official functions. There were, of course, exceptions, and I personally enjoyed

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much hospitality at the hands of a few less narrow-minded people.

In the depth of winter it is generally too cold to skate, but even when the weather permits it, it is very rare to see Russian men or women in society indulging in the pastime, the ice being generally patronised by foreigners or Russians of a lower order. It is the same with the ice hills, or 'Montagnes Russes,' as they are called. A Russian in society is never seen there, whereas many members of the English and other foreign colonies are constantly seen enjoying this very exciting exercise.

Russians are lavish with their money when they possess it, and think nothing of spending fabulous sums over dinners, suppers, and the like. They are also very appreciative of dramatic art, and the gifts showered upon great foreign singers and actresses by practically the whole of society, from the Emperor downwards, must make an engagement in St. Petersburg or Moscow exceedingly remunerative to those fortunate individuals.

St. Petersburg is, I suppose, the worst paved capital in Europe. The roads are made of large cobble-stones, and much domed in the centre. When you add to this the holes caused by traffic and frost, it can be imagined that jolting over such thoroughfares in a crazy vehicle like the droshki, which answers to our cab, is not a pleasant experience. Such means of locomotion, however, are fortunately restricted to the summer months, for

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when the snows fall these horrible roads are, sometimes in twelve hours, converted into the most perfect and smoothest streets in the world. The change is really quite extraordinary, for not only have all the roughness and jolting disappeared, but the noise of carriages and carts bumping along has given place to the quiet and noiseless progress of the sledge. In other words, the streets of St. Petersburg, from having been the worst in the world, have suddenly been transformed into the best and easiest roads imaginable.

So much do the Russian cabmen dislike the return to the hated droshki, that when spring comes and the snow melts they can be seen still in their sledges making use of any little snow or ice that may remain on the sides of the streets. I should here say that a droshki is perhaps the most uncomfortable as well as the most ugly conveyance that has ever been invented. It is like a very diminutive victoria with a seat scarcely big enough for one, although intended for two; and when two persons do occupy it they have to hold on to each other in order to avoid falling out when jolting over the uneven roads.

Curiously enough, the minimum of political liberty and the maximum of social freedom are to be found side by side under this strange autocratic Government. Although in Russia the press is gagged, obnoxious articles in foreign newspapers are obliterated, and the native dares not even whisper an opinion as to politics, he can have his

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supper at a restaurant at 1 A.M. if it so pleases him. In England, this much-vaunted land of freedom, although we can say what we like with regard to politics, we are told that if we do not have our supper before 11.30 P.M., we must go without.

Russians are, as a rule, heavy drinkers and great gamblers. There was one man, a prominent member of society, who commenced life with scarcely any money at all, but who eventually amassed a very large fortune by a combination of luck and play. He never suggested a game to any one, nor did he ever refuse to play when invited to do so. He was always as ready to play for small sums as for big ones, and he himself told me, when I asked him if he did not find it inconvenient to be continually changing the amount of the stakes, that it was no matter to him what the stakes were, and that the only rule which he invariably followed was, never to play for more than his adversary was able to pay, should he lose. A very rich Jew, the owner of large estates and of a beautiful house in St. Petersburg, tackled the gambler of whom I am speaking, with the result that he not only lost all his ready money, but also his estates and his house in the capital, in an apartment in which he was allowed to live rent free by his victorious opponent.

Although Russians of the upper ten thousand are great travellers, most of those who can afford

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it spending a considerable part of the year abroad, their ignorance with regard to England and the English is quite remarkable. I was once in a club at St. Petersburg, when a Russian just returned from England entered the room. He was immediately hailed by all his friends, and commenced relating a series of anecdotes in connection with his visit to our country. They were most of them somewhat exaggerated, but the last was quite beyond the licence even of a Russian traveller. The gentleman in question dilated on the miseries of an English Sabbath, and in illustration of his meaning, stated that one Sunday on his way to London, the train in which he was travelling stopped at Exeter a little before 11 A.M., when the passengers were informed that they must all attend divine service at the cathedral, after which the train would proceed on its way. They were then marched to the cathedral by a bevy of police, who, at the conclusion of the service, escorted them back to the train, which then resumed its journey. If such notions exist with regard to the customs prevailing in our island, it is not surprising that so few Russian travellers honour us with their visits.

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CHAPTER IV

DANGEROUS POLICY

In the centre of the city of St. Petersburg is a large plain called the Champ de Mars, which, although it is principally used for popular fêtes and grand military displays, is surrounded by objects calculated to bring back recollections of the saddest nature. Not a hundred yards from the north-east corner of this open space stands the votive chapel, erected on the spot where in 1866 the Emperor Alexander II., grandfather of the present sovereign, was shot at by Karakosoff, as he was leaving the Summer Garden. About the same distance from the south-west corner may be seen another chapel of a like description, which marks the place where, a few years later, on 13th March 1881, this unfortunate monarch, the liberator of the serfs, fell a victim to the Nihilist conspiracy. To the south-east stands the palace of the Emperor Paul, in which that monarch lost his life at the hands of his own courtiers. It may be interesting here to state that of the sovereigns who have ruled Russia since the reign of Peter the Great, certainly four, and probably five, were murdered—a fact which goes far to show that

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the system of autocratic government has not been much more successful with regard to the rulers than it has with regard to the ruled.

Immediately opposite the Champ de Mars, and on the other side of the river, is the famous fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, in the church of which members of the Imperial family are buried. The fortress itself is principally used as a prison for political offenders, and in it were confined Rissakoff and his accomplices before their trial. It was Rissakoff who threw the first bomb at the sledge of Alexander II. on the occasion of his murder. In the vaults beneath the church lie the remains of more than one Russian sovereign murdered by his own subjects, and notably those of Alexander II. It is in the underground casements of the fortress that the prisoners are kept. This sinister building, standing in view of the principal palaces, although it is itself one of the most pleasing features of the town, is regarded by all Russians with a feeling of mysterious dread, and many are the tales that are related with bated breath concerning the horrors perpetrated within its precincts in the name of Justice.

It was on the Champ de Mars that, shortly before the Russo-Turkish campaign (November 15, 1876), Alexander II. reviewed the whole of the Imperial Guard and the other troops belonging to the military district of St. Petersburg. As it had been rumoured that the Emperor would

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avail himself of this opportunity for making some allusion to the impending war, more than ordinary importance was attached to the proceedings, and vast numbers of people crowded to the review ground. Nor were they destined to be disappointed, for after the usual inspection and march past the Emperor assembled all the mounted officers around him, and, alluding to the mobilisation which His Majesty stated it was his duty to order in view of the obstinate resistance of Turkey to the will of 'united Europe,' he called upon his brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas, to take command of the army about to operate against the Turkish Empire. It is needless to say that when the Emperor, after this short speech, embraced his brother and wished him and his army success, the shouts which arose from the troops as well as from the assembled multitude knew no bounds. Cheer after cheer greeted the Emperor's words, and the soldiers taking off their shakoes threw them high into the air. The mob was equally enthusiastic, and for a long time surrounded the Prince of Oldenburg's palace, whither the Emperor repaired after the review, cheering and shouting as only a Russian mob can when the feelings of the people have been thoroughly aroused. Considering the pitch of excitement to which the public mind had been wrought by the majority of the press and the Moscow Slavophil agitators, it was not surprising that the words of their Emperor, which amounted practically to a

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declaration of war against Turkey, should have been received by the people with such wild acclamations of delight. About this time it was commonly said in St. Petersburg society that some foreign enterprise of a warlike nature had become necessary in order to occupy the public mind and counteract the socialistic propaganda of Nihilism. Some people even went so far as to state that, although the war was perhaps uncalled for in other ways, the end in this case justified the means; for, they argued, disaffection had become so universal that nothing but a foreign war could divert men's minds from the revolutionary grooves in which they were running. These short-sighted so-called patriots had their way: war was declared, and the Russian armies marched to the walls of Constantinople, but no further. Here they were stopped by the outspoken language of England, and having made peace at San Stefano—a peace, it is true, greatly modified at Berlin—they withdrew in due course to their native country. Now what were the results of the war as far as the internal conditions of Russia were concerned? They were in direct opposition to the prophecies of those who maintained that war abroad would lead to peace at home. After the first blush of success had subsided the natural reaction ensued. Men began to analyse the results of an undertaking which had prostrated the country morally, physically, and financially. The Russian armies had been victorious, it is true, but their victory

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was after all but negative. They had not been allowed to hoist the Russian flag on St. Sophia; they had not even been permitted to enter the Turkish capital. The strategy of their generals had been proved to be beneath contempt, and the organisation of their army but little better than it was during the Crimean War. Officers of high rank, both military and civil, were found to have grown rich at the expense of the soldier; and last, but by no means least, the soldiers had returned disgusted at having been made to fight and endure untold hardships for the liberation of a people whom they had been taught to look upon as crushed and oppressed by an alien race, but whom they found to be infinitely better off in every respect than the Russian peasants, who had been called from their homes in thousands to join the ranks of the liberating army. The ingratitude of the Bulgarians themselves towards the men who had come to fight their battle, and their sullen disinclination to do anything to lighten their hardships, had the inevitable effect of making the name of Bulgaria hateful to every Russian soldier. Now, what were the advantages gained by the war which the Russian Government could put into the scale in order to counterbalance the fearful loss of life and treasure which the campaign had entailed? Russia exacted a strip of territory from her ally Roumania (without whose assistance the war would in all probability have been attended with very different

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results), had obtained some coveted places in Asia Minor, and, above all, had liberated the oppressed Bulgarians from the yoke of the hated Turk. All this, however, was not sufficient in the eyes of the Russian people to compensate them for the immense sacrifices which they had made, and public opinion, only temporarily affected by the war, reverted to those ideas of reform which the events of the campaign had shown to be more necessary than ever. Even the Emperor could not be blind to the state of affairs disclosed during the conduct of the war. He could see nothing but rottenness and corruption in every department of the administration, and this awakening on his part to the real condition of affairs led to the retirement of the Grand Duke Nicholas as well as that of Count Ignatieff, the famous ambassador, and the prime instigator of the war. The discontent, however, engendered among the educated classes by all the circumstances which the war had brought to light could not be allayed by such trivial facts as the dismissal of a member of the Imperial family and the temporary extinction of an eminent diplomatist. The natural results of the war now began to show themselves in their true light. Reforms of a sweeping nature were demanded by all classes, and the Nihilists, who had been watching their opportunity, left no stone unturned in their endeavours to encourage the people in their revolutionary tendencies. The terrible consequences of the policy which drove

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the Emperor into the Turkish war is now a matter of history. When discontent became so apparent among his people in 1876, he was persuaded by persons who had ulterior objects in view, and to whom he had unfortunately granted too much latitude, that he could best put an end to it by an aggressive war, and instead of endeavouring to combat revolution by the introduction of moderate and necessary reforms, he fell into the trap so artfully laid for him, and embarked in the enterprise which led to such fatal results. The revolutionary spirit of the people increased day by day, until the Nihilists, encouraged by the general discontent, made three desperate attempts on the life of the one man who, perhaps of all others in the Empire, was personally most averse from a policy of aggression. It is known how the three first attempts at assassination failed. The fourth, however, succeeded, and curiously enough at not a stone's-throw from the very parade-ground where the Emperor's announcement of his intention to invade Turkey had been received with such joyful enthusiasm only three years before. A war with Turkey, we were told at the time, would save Russia from the curse of Nihilism. The little chapel, however, which stands hard by, and recalls the fate of Alexander II., scarcely confirms the prophecies then made, and should be a warning to all those who would recklessly involve their country in similar enterprises.

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CHAPTER V

MOSCOW

THE line of rail which unites St. Petersburg and Moscow was built during the reign of the Emperor Nicholas I., whose name it bears, and is the straightest railroad in the world. When the original survey for the line was completed it was submitted to the Emperor for the Imperial sanction. Noticing the somewhat circuitous route proposed by the engineers, and notwithstanding their explanation that for financial and commercial reasons it was essential that a train from St. Petersburg to Moscow should call at the larger towns, even at the expense of a slight deviation from the direct road, the Emperor called for pencil and ruler, and drawing a straight line from city to city, ordered that the railway should be so constructed. It thus happens that all along the road are splendid stations (most of them containing a large suite of apartments in case a member of the Imperial family should require them), but no towns worthy of the name. The journey, a distance of about four hundred miles, is through a flat, uninteresting country. The carriages, mostly built on the American system, are comfortable,

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and the stoppages frequent, but at the stations there are no signs of that activity and movement so familiar to all travellers in England.

I remember seeing along the entire road small rough wooden altars, placed about 150 yards apart, and each with a pile of wood by its side. When the Emperor travels at night a fire is lighted on each of these, and is kept burning by a soldier placed there for the purpose. The entire line is thus illuminated, and it is hoped by this means to baffle all Nihilistic attempts to blow up Imperial trains. As long as such measures of precaution are considered necessary it is needless to expect any great reduction of the military forces of the Empire, for a short arithmetical sum will show that every time the Emperor travels from one of his capitals to the other a whole army is employed to protect him from his own subjects.

Moscow is as unlike St. Petersburg in its habits and customs of everyday life as it is in architecture and general appearance. Although the latter city is what may be called the official capital, the heart of the nation beats at Moscow. Moscow is national in every sense of the term—it is more Russian than London is English, more Russian even than Paris is French. All the finest traditions of the nation are closely connected with this splendid city, the quaint grandeur of which makes it an object of veneration to all true Russians, and a fitting home for the historical treasures of the

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country. Its inhabitants have a thorough contempt for St. Petersburg and everything belonging to it. They look upon it as a German town with a German name and foreign customs, which only became the capital owing to the insane freak of an autocrat who, according to their ideas, retarded the natural development of the nation by his wicked attempts to force the civilisation of the West on his unwilling subjects.

When Alexander III. was placed on the throne by the murder of his father, several organs of the Moscow press invited him to take up his residence in the ancient capital, where, surrounded by his faithful Muscovites, he need fear no danger. Others, however, did not hesitate to show their unwillingness to accept so great a responsibility, and pointed out with much truth that it was by no means certain that the Emperor would be safer in Moscow than elsewhere. Even if it were true, they said, that the Nihilists muster in greater numbers at St. Petersburg than in Moscow, they would certainly follow the court to the latter city should the capital be changed. It seems as if at one time there really had been some idea of moving the seat of Government from St. Petersburg, but the scheme was wisely abandoned, and appears now to be as remote as ever. The expense of such a change would be ruinous, and this is certainly not a time when Russia can afford to waste money on ideas more sentimental than practical.

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On arrival at the Moscow railway station, the traveller cannot fail to be struck by the general noise and confusion which prevail there to a far greater extent than at similar stations in Western Europe. Instead of finding cabs or droshkis standing on a rank, and under some sort of police supervision, no sooner does a visitor show himself at the portico of the station than he is set upon by innumerable drivers who, hat in hand, endeavour to persuade him that their respective vehicles are the best, the fastest, and the cheapest in the town. Having selected a droshki, he drives to one of the many hotels, of which the Slavianski Bazaar was in my time both the newest and the best. As any attempt to give a description of Moscow in a limited space would be hopeless, I propose to confine myself to giving some idea of the general impression made on a stranger by this curious and beautiful city. Many people fancy that when they have visited St. Petersburg they are capable of forming an opinion as to Russia, its people and its customs. No greater mistake can be made. The Northern capital is what the Muscovites justly call a bastard town, and were it not for the vile pavement of its streets, and an occasional church of Oriental design, one might easily fancy oneself in any one of the larger cities of Europe. St. Petersburg has no characteristics peculiar to itself—its restaurants are French, so are its theatres, so are its public gardens. In the streets are found the same rows

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of lofty houses which are found in Berlin, Paris, or Vienna: in short, St. Petersburg is cosmopolitan, and its inhabitants ape the manners and customs of the West. In Moscow things are different. The very first glimpse of this splendid city as the train approaches it is sufficient to show that here, at any rate, is something thoroughly Russian, thoroughly national, and the drive from the station to the centre of the town only confirms this early impression. The irregularity of the streets, the dress of the inhabitants, the fantastic architecture of houses and churches—in fact, all that meets the eye, combine to make up a picture the quaint and varied beauty of which it is impossible adequately to describe. In the centre of the city is the Kremlin, surrounded by wall and moat. The latter is now dried up and turned into a public garden, in which the buildings of the exhibition, held many years ago, were erected. At the base of one side of the hill on which the Kremlin stands flows the Moskva, a small river from which the town takes its name, and which, after dividing it into two parts and joining the Oka, makes its way to the Volga at Nijni. The principal streets and the best shops are to be found within the walls of the Kremlin itself, as also the palace, the arsenal, many other public buildings, and churches innumerable. The best view of the town and its suburbs is obtained from the large terrace which forms the base of the Imperial palace. Looking over the parapet, one

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sees the green slopes of the former moat running down to the Kremlin wall, with its curious green-capped towers and crenellated galleries, at the foot of which flows the Moskva. Above the wall, at one end of the terrace, rise the many-coloured domes and cupolas of St. Basil, the building of which is said to have cost the architect his sight, his eyes having been put out by the order of the sovereign to prevent his building a second church like it. At the other end of the same terrace the view is obstructed by the new cathedral, which stands on a hill by itself, with its golden dome towering high above all that surrounds it. Looking beyond the river, away towards the Sparrow Hills, from which Napoleon obtained his first view of Moscow, the sight is quite magnificent. Right across the broad valley which separates the ancient Kremlin and the river at its foot from the distant hills stretches the city and its suburbs in a confused mass of churches, trees, buildings, and gardens. In the foreground may be seen a few streets not unlike those of European cities, with here and there an open 'place' or some large public building. But immediately beyond commence the picturesque, irregular thoroughfares peculiar to Moscow and other strictly Russian towns. Here the houses are chiefly of wood, and one story high. The walls are of various colours, but the flat roofs are almost invariably painted green. Each house is separated from its neighbour by the small garden which surrounds it, a

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feature of great importance when attempting to form an idea of the general effect of a bird's-eye view of the city. When it is said that all these houses and gardens are thickly interspersed with churches, no two of which are alike either in shape or colour, and that each has several cupolas, gold, silver, red or blue, connected by falling chains of gold or silver, it will be understood that the general effect from the Kremlin terrace is as unique as it is beautiful. To see the Kremlin itself to the best advantage it is necessary to cross the river, from the far side of which many splendid views of the curious old citadel and its surroundings may be obtained.

The principal theatres and restaurants of Moscow are situated in the centre of the town, near the Kremlin. The Grand Opera is well placed in a large square, and its size is about the same as Covent Garden. The best restaurant is called the Hermitage, which in cleanliness and general excellence surpasses anything I have hitherto seen in Europe. It is an enormous building, with several splendid public and private dining-rooms. In the principal room is a large orchestral organ which cost some £2000, and plays anything one may like to ask for, from *Le Prophète* to *Madame Angot*. The dress of the waiters is the perfection of neatness: a pair of snow-white linen trousers, under a Russian-shaped shirt of like material, which, fastened by a red ribbon round the waist, reaches to the knee. A single

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spot of dirt is sufficient for the man to change his entire dress; and as the waiters wear list slippers, they appear to move about like ghosts at some phantom feast. The kitchens and other offices below are quite worthy of inspection, and the scrupulous cleanliness observable in these hidden and mysterious departments are certainly worthy of imitation in our own country. The whole of this establishment was under the immediate control of a Tartar manager, Nicolai by name, who spoke French fairly well, and superintended everything in person. The proprietor of this marvellous establishment conferred a real benefit on Moscow, for, in order to compete with him all other proprietors have been compelled to follow in his footsteps, the natural consequence of which is that there are now many first-rate restaurants all over the town.

About three miles outside the city, and in the immediate vicinity of the Imperial Palace of Petroffski, are several places of public amusement, to which the people resort on a summer's evening. In one—also called the Hermitage—the amusements are most varied. In the centre of large grounds stands an enormous summer theatre, built of wood, and surrounded by open galleries. Close by, and in the same garden, is a large open-air gymnasium lighted by electric light, for acrobatic performances. Next to this is a covered stage where national songs and dances are performed. The remainder of the garden is devoted

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to shooting-galleries, bowling-alleys, and all the other attributes of similar places of entertainment. Close to these gardens are large restaurants and cafés, to which people repair before and after the theatrical performances at the Hermitage. It is here that the famous gipsies, whose songs are so popular and characteristic, are mostly to be found. Each café has its troupe, the female members of which may be seen pacing up and down the large rooms, two and two, smoking cigarettes, and ready to enter into negotiations with any one desiring to hear the troupe sing. It is absolutely necessary to bargain on these occasions. The usual price is about £8 for five songs, but all depends upon the demand, and it is not at all uncommon for some rich old Moscow merchant to pay as much as two or three hundred pounds for the pleasure of hearing a few of his favourite ballads. The gipsies, however, are not what they used to be. They have discarded for the most part the picturesque costume they used formerly to wear, and have taken to European dress; thus their songs, although wild and inspiriting, have lost much of their former charm.

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CHAPTER VI

NIJNI NOVGOROD

RAILWAY travelling in Russia is very different from what it is in England. The lines, for the most part, are badly constructed, and the speed of the engines is limited. A rate of twenty miles per hour is considered exceedingly good, and as the saying that time is money is in no way applicable to the Russian nation, people are perfectly contented with things as they are. On the other hand, the railway carriages, which have through communication, after the American fashion, are infinitely superior to ours, and the stations are frequent and generally commodious. The Russians appear to look upon railway travelling more as a pleasure than a business, and as if it was impossible to have too much of a good thing, they invariably betake themselves to the station some hour or hour and a half before the departure of the train. Thus when I arrived early at the Moscow terminus of the Nijni line one summer evening to start for Nijni Novgorod on my way to Orenburg, I found the waiting-rooms and lobbies already crammed with those who were to be my fellow-travellers—a motley crowd of men,

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women, soldiers, sailors, merchants, Tartars, and Persians, all going to the same destination—the great Eastern fair. As in most provincial Russian hotels linen is not provided for the guests, the latter are compelled to travel about with their own, and consequently their principal luggage always appears to consist of bedding, sheets, and pillows, with which articles railway stations are invariably crowded prior to the start. There are two other necessaries without which a Russian of the middle and lower classes would be loth to move, namely, his teapot and small provision of tea. Armed with these, however, he is perfectly happy, and at all the railway stations he or his wife may be seen rushing, teapot in hand, into the buffet to get a fill-up of hot water for the trifling sum of a copeck or two.

That Russians should be so fond of arriving unnecessarily early at a railway station has always been a puzzle to me, for when there they do nothing but drink tea and smoke cigarettes; but what is still more extraordinary is that the train is also always ready in the station at least an hour before it is required, with engine attached and steam up, although no one is allowed to enter it until the 'first bell' has sounded, some twenty minutes before the hour of departure. The number of guards to each train is excessive, there being about one to each carriage. In winter, when fires have to be kept up throughout the train, more servants are necessary than in Eng-

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land, but in summer this is not so, and the circumstance only affords another example of the Russian system of employing five men to do the work of one. I should not forget to describe the railway guard's dress, which is picturesque and at the same time national. It consists of a Russian-shaped tunic of dark cloth fastening diagonally down the front, loose knickerbockers of the same material, a pair of high well-polished boots, a crimson sash round the waist, and a small round fur-bound cap. The head guard is always particularly smart, with an addition of silver lace. He is a great personage, and walks about with an air of importance, which precludes the possibility of his being addressed except by persons of superior position. Although, as a rule, the proverbial half-crown, or rather rouble in this case, goes a long way in Russia with respect to getting what one wants, it is by no means infallible as far as railway travelling is concerned. In autocratic Russia there seems to be a democratic hobby which renders it anything but certain that a bribe will secure a compartment to oneself. Only the other day a Russian friend of mine offered to pay for every seat in a carriage in order to be alone with his family, but the radical station-master, failing to see any advantage in retaining a whole carriage for a few aristocrats, would not allow it. Before leaving the subject of Russian railways, I should mention two other peculiarities. A brake was scarcely ever used when stopping, but steam

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being shut off, the train was allowed to drag its weary way until it at last stopped, its progress dying a natural death from want of motive power. The second peculiarity is the fact that most of the railways have but a single line of rails. On some of the strategical lines the companies are compelled by Government to lay down a certain length of double line every year. These two facts account in great measure for the low rate of speed, a great loss of time being occasioned on the one hand by non-employment of brake power, and on the other by the continual shunting rendered necessary by the absence of a second line of rails.

To return to my journey. The distance from Moscow to Nijni Novgorod is about 270 miles, and leaving the former by the night express at 8.30 P.M., we reached our destination at the confluence of the rivers Volga and Oka at ten o'clock the following morning.

Nijni Novgorod is now famous throughout the world as the great mercantile centre where the products of the East are exchanged for those of the West, and although the traveller who expects on arrival to find himself surrounded by representatives of China, Persia, and Central Asia in all the splendour of Eastern dress will be somewhat disappointed, he cannot fail to be deeply impressed by this wonderful place, the chief characteristic of which is that, notwithstanding its vast area, its cathedral, churches, theatres,

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restaurants, and warehouses, its annual life is but of some six weeks' duration. The drive from the station to the town, until one reaches the river, which is spanned by a bridge of boats, is uninteresting enough, and were it not for the more than ordinary traffic, and the more than usually bad roads, there is nothing to denote the proximity of the great fair. When, however, the river is reached, the aspect changes. It is the Oka which one crosses just before its junction with the Volga, and on either side of the bridge it is choked with barges, steamers, tugs, rafts, and all the other attributes of a busy river. Both banks, as far as the eye can reach, are piled up with merchandise. The very bridge one is on groans under the load of the crossing traffic, and the shouts and oaths of the Cossacks on duty show how hard it is to keep anything like order among this incongruous mass of Russian, Tartar, and other drivers who, urging their wretched animals to fresh efforts as they flounder along through the dirt, take little heed of what is said to them by Cossack or policeman. If the lot of an English policeman is not a happy one, it will, at any rate, compare most favourably with that of his Russian equivalent, who is respected by neither high nor low. I have often wondered what a Russian constable would think of the ease with which a single member of our police force is able to manage the traffic in such thoroughfares as, say, the top of St. James's Street. In Russia a man

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generally argues with an interfering police officer, and it is not until the latter shows signs of resorting to strong measures that the delinquent thinks it time to obey.

Having crossed the bridge, one is on the 'town side' of the river as distinguished from the 'fair side,' and it is this portion of Nijni Novgorod alone which is a permanent institution, with its military governor, civil governor, mayor, etc.; whereas the fair, which lies low on the opposite bank, lives but for a while in summer, the greater portion of it being submerged in the spring, when the united waters of the Volga and Oka, swollen by torrents of melted snow, overflow their banks and inundate the neighbouring country in some places to a distance of eight or ten miles. The hill on which the town is built is very precipitous; and as it is from this height that the best view of the fair, town, and two rivers can be obtained, I must ask my readers to make the ascent with me, and to imagine themselves standing on a terrace skirting the hill not far from its summit. We are facing north, and at our feet flows the Oka straight across from west to east, striking the broad waters of the Volga at right angles just beneath us, as they make their way in a southerly direction to the distant Caspian. On the opposite side of the Oka, and on the broad, low-lying triangular area formed by the junction of the two rivers, we see the great fair stretching away into the far distance, a confused mixture of

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stone, brick, and wooden buildings, for the most part enveloped in clouds of dirty sand. In the centre of the fair is the governor's house, a large square building, from which streets and avenues radiate in different directions. To the right stands the new cathedral, a hideous structure of red, white, and green. The mania which Russians have for building churches is quite remarkable. Schools they cannot afford, but for new churches money is always forthcoming. Beyond the cathedral, and in the direction of the governor's house, a long line of green pagoda roofs, indicating the position of the Chinese avenue not far from the Mohammedan mosque, is conspicuous. Along the right bank of the Volga, as far as one can see in a northerly direction, are the Siberian wharves for the disembarkation and storage of all merchandise coming from that part of the Empire; while a little further inland, and to the left, are the long, low, thatched buildings devoted to the tea-trade. Exactly above the spot where we stand is the ancient kremlin of the city, which in times gone by has been the witness of many a well-contested fight.

Having studied the panorama for a while, we descend the hill and, recrossing the bridge of boats, enter the fair itself. We first come to the bourse, round which we find crowds of Tartar and other workmen waiting to be hired, and, passing the corn exchange, we make our way to the governor's house. The streets through which

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we walk are crowded with throngs of busy folk. Under the low arcades on either side are shops of all sorts and sizes, at the doors of which are exposed samples of the goods which are sold within. One street is devoted to furs, the next to ironmongery, another to crockery, a fourth to jewellery, and so on, the various trades being concentrated in different localities. Long, never-ceasing processions of creaky carts, laden with every species of merchandise, thread their weary way along the narrow thoroughfares to their various destinations in numbers which make one wonder whence they all can come. Entering the dark, vaulted arcades beneath the governor's house, we see innumerable shops and stalls, where jewellery, perfumery, Circassian goods, and other *articles de luxe* are found in great variety. Here also are the headquarters of the vendors of turquoises, generally Persians or Tartars, who produce from their pockets dirty, mysterious-looking paper parcels in which their treasures are kept. No one, however, but a connoisseur should trust himself to buy from these cunning traders, for not only are many of their stones false, but they frequently give them a good blue colour by moistening them with ammonia, the effect of which only lasts a short time, and leaves the stone its original green or light-blue colour. Having visited the iron wharves and the many other departments of trade, it is interesting as well as amusing to go to the restaurants, where, in fact, all actual

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business is transacted over never-ending cups of tea. The Russians have a manner of doing business quite peculiar to themselves. A merchant has corn to sell, and another is anxious to buy. They are brought together by a mutual friend and repair to a tea-shop, where over numerous cups every topic, save the one uppermost in their minds, is discussed. The next day the same farce is enacted, and it is often not until the third or fourth meeting that the word business is mentioned.

It is at night that life in Nijni is seen to the best advantage. At the conclusion of the day's work the wealthier classes flock to the restaurants and cafés, where alternate troupes of Russian and gipsy singers enliven the evening with their quaint, wild ballads. The lower orders have likewise their places of amusement, which belong, however, more to the casino and dancing-saloon class of entertainment. There are also streets of booths and shows such as might be seen at any country fair in England. I was much amused by the following inscription over the entrance of a wax-work show: 'Londonski West-endski Bazaar.' Notwithstanding the British origin thus attributed to this exhibition, I doubt whether it ever could have been licensed by Her Majesty's Lord Chamberlain—that is to say, if the waxen inmates of the tent were to appear in London in the same costumes as those which adorned them at Nijni. In the centre of the fair is an enormous theatre

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of red brick, but it was closed at the time of my visit. Although the permanent population of this extraordinary place is scarcely fifty thousand, during the fair it amounts to over half a million, and it is for the accommodation of this nomad population, which is here to-day and gone to-morrow, that the cathedral, churches, theatres, cafés, hotels, and restaurants have been built. Smoking in the fair is strictly prohibited, and lines of buckets are seen on the roofs of most of the booths as a precaution against fire.

In old days murder and outrages of all kinds were matters of frequent occurrence, but a former governor, a Count Ignatieff, instituted a system of Cossack patrols, which had a most salutary effect.

It is from Nijni Novgorod that all those condemned to Siberia take their final departure from Europe in the floating cages described elsewhere in this book.

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CHAPTER VII

DOWN THE VOLGA

SABLENOFF'S Hotel, at Nijni Novgorod, is a fine building, situated on a terrace near the summit of the hill on which the town is built, and commanding a fine view of the fair as well as of the junction of the river Oka with the Volga. Just below the hotel are the landing-stages of the steamers belonging to the different companies competing for traffic on the latter river and the Kama.

The best boats of the Caucasus and Mercury line are built on the American principle. They have two decks, and excellent accommodation for passengers; but owing to the shallowness of the rivers towards the end of the summer it is hardly prudent to trust to them at that period of the year for, drawing so much more water than their smaller rivals, they are more liable to get stranded on the innumerable sandbanks which make the navigation of these rivers so difficult. The same company likewise owns smaller one-decked steamers which carry the mails.

I took my passage to Samara on one of these, the *Czarevna Maria*, in preference to one of the

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American build, and had no cause to regret my choice. We started from Nijni at noon, on a beautiful day in August, and having run down the Oka into the Volga, commenced our descent of that fine though somewhat uninteresting river. The *Czarevna Maria* was a good one-decked vessel, painted entirely white. In front of the funnel was a deck-house, forming the first-class saloon, below which were the public and private cabins of the same class, while above was the quarter-deck, amply provided with benches, etc. On this deck, and immediately in front of the funnel, was the steering turret, in which were always two pilots and the officer in charge. The officers have little to do with the management of the ship as far as steering is concerned; it is intrusted to four pilots, who know every bend and sandbank in the river, and receive an annual salary of about £30 for the months during which the navigation is open. It is a curious fact that all the pilots of the steamers which ply the Volga come from the same village. The second-class quarter-deck was in rear of the funnel, and made a covering for the second and third-class passengers, who slept below it as best they could, for here there were no cabins. The steamer was commanded by an officer of the Imperial navy, who wore the Government uniform. He was assisted by two officers not belonging to the navy, and two engineers. Our captain rarely showed himself during the two days and nights I was on board; indeed, I think I only saw him

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on two occasions, once at dinner, and another time when we stopped at some village to take in passengers. One of the principal duties of the captain is to enter into negotiations at the different landing-stages with peasants desirous of being conveyed by boat. During harvest-time the inhabitants of whole villages are often engaged to bring in the crops at places far distant from their homes. On these occasions the competition between the steamers of the different companies is very great, and captains are authorised to depart from the tariff and make the best bargains they can. On board these boats is again evident that vicious practice which exists all over Russia of having more persons than necessary to do the work required. One mate besides the captain would be sufficient in England for river steamers of the same size; but on the Volga they consider two officers, besides the captain and mate, necessary for the performance of the duty. The incomes of the companies suffer in consequence, while at the same time their servants are underpaid. The steamers of the Caucasus and Mercury Company use petroleum as fuel: it comes from the naphtha springs of Baku, on the Caspian—probably the same as those which have recently been reported to be on fire. The petroleum is blown into the furnace of the engine through tubes at right angles to each other; it becomes pulverised as it enters, and in this form ignites and maintains a perpetual flame beneath the boiler. This fuel is considered

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on the whole more economical than any other. It is brought by river to the various depôts of the company, where it is stored in enormous vats. Being in a liquid state, it takes less time to fill the reservoirs on board than is necessary to replenish the coal-bunkers of an ordinary steamer.

Petroleum, it appears, also supplies a greater amount of motive power than any other fuel stored within the same limits. Thus from Nijni to Samara, a distance of over 700 miles, we only took in petroleum once. The cabins were scrupulously clean, even according to English ideas; the cooking very good as well as cheap, and the servants most civil and obliging. The first-class passengers, about ten in number, were chiefly merchants returning, some of them with their wives, from the great Nijni fair.

Our second- and third-class passengers were indeed a curious mixture of nationalities. They consisted of Russians, Tartars, Circassians, Bokhariots, Khivans, and Persians, most of whom were also returning to their homes from Nijni. All of them filthily dirty and many of them drunk, they were huddled together, men, women, and children, in one unsavoury mass under the after quarter-deck, packed like herrings in a barrel. The extreme shallowness of the river in some places, as well as the numerous sandbanks, made it extremely hard to avoid running aground, but we luckily did not touch the bottom once from Nijni to Samara. Formerly the steamers did not run at night. Now,

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however, the pilots had improved so much that it was no longer necessary to take this precaution.

In the daytime the pilots were guided by posts along the shore, from which hung mysterious wooden signs which at night were changed for coloured lights. But even with this assistance it was marvellous how the pilots managed to avoid stranding their vessels, so complicated was the navigation. There was always a man in the bows with a long pole, with which to take soundings. In parts the Volga is very broad, more especially south of Kazan; but, although a magnificent river both as regards length and volume of water, it cannot be called beautiful. The left bank is low and ugly, whereas the right is as a rule high and sometimes prettily wooded. Here and there might be seen a picturesque village either nestling in woods or standing out in bold relief against the skyline, or at other times in terraces down to the water's edge.

Every precaution was taken against the possibility of collision. Not only was the rule of the road strictly laid down, but in addition, all steamers meeting signalled to each other with flags by day and lights by night, in order to show that the one was visible to the other.

The principal fish of the Volga is the much-esteemed sterlet, which is caught in a most simple and primitive manner. Miles of line are laid across the river, zigzag fashion, from one bank to the other. To this line are attached, at intervals,

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numberless smaller ones, each bearing many but unbaited hooks. The water is then beaten with long poles from boats, and the fish, frightened at the splash, dart off and foul-hook themselves on the lines, which, after the river has been beaten, are hauled in and the fish taken off. Some years ago, when at Nijni with the late Duke of Edinburgh, I saw many sterlet caught in this manner, which is considered more efficacious than netting. The majority of the boats we met were large barges, most of them laden with cargoes of dried fish from the Caspian, or with petroleum from Baku, and were towed by powerful tugs.

Small fleets of rowing-boats were also occasionally to be seen fishing in the neighbourhood of some of the villages. Most of the first-class passengers spent their time in reading or playing at chess, whereas those of the second-class who had energy enough to do something besides sleep indulged in tea and draughts. I must not forget a sporting excitement for which I was indebted to the steward. I was in my cabin when he made his appearance with a small gold watch attached to a dirty black ribbon in one hand, and a sheet of paper with several names on it in the other. He informed me mysteriously that he was about to raffle the watch, and asked me to purchase a rouble ticket. I paid my money, and my name was added to the list. Some hours afterwards I met the man and asked him when the raffle would be drawn, to which he replied in an undertone,

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that it had already been drawn, and that the watch had been won by the stewardess! I could not help wondering whether these raffles took place every voyage, and whether the watch always remained in the family.

On the evening of the first day we stopped at the village of Vasil Soursk, about a hundred miles from our starting-point. It was a dirty, insignificant place, the headquarters of the Chuvashi and Cheremissi tribes, of Finnish origin, who are celebrated for the manufacture of coffins made out of one solid piece of oak, and used by some of the religious sects of Central Russia. On the following morning the steamer reached Kazan, a little more than 250 miles from Nijni Novgorod. This fine old Oriental town, with its quaint battlemented walls, and whose historical traditions date back to the thirteenth century, is prettily situated a little inland from the left bank of the river. It was originally inhabited by Mongolians, but in the fifteenth century it became the capital of the Tartar kingdom, which defied the Russians until its capture by them under John the Terrible in the middle of the sixteenth century. It was taken and destroyed more than a hundred years later by the great pretender and rebel Tougatcheff, and it was burned more than once during the last century. Between Kazan and Simbirsk, which was reached the following evening, we passed one of the large American steamers which had left Nijni twenty-four hours before us. It was high and dry on a

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sandbank, thus proving that I had done right in choosing the smaller boat. At Simbirsk, a great corn centre, we took in passengers, as well as petroleum for fuel. An enormous vat stood on the landing-stage, filled with this inflammable matter, but its close proximity in no way interfered with the smoking which went on in all directions. Two troughs having been placed so as to convey the petroleum from the vat to our reservoirs, a plug was loosened, and the dark, oily liquid flowed quickly into the steamer. The process lasted quite twenty minutes. The landing-stage was crowded by the inhabitants, anxious to sell their most excellent honey, neatly packed in native boxes. It was to Simbirsk, which is by no means so old a town as Kazan, that Tougatcheff was sent in an iron cage when finally captured in the reign of the Empress Catherine II. The following morning we arrived soon after daybreak at Samara, where I disembarked. Samara stands on a height above the right bank of the Volga, and at the confluence of that river with the Samara. In days gone by it was a place of military importance, but now the old fortress no longer exists, and Samara has become a great trading centre, its principal commerce being in tallow and corn. A long plank bridge led from the landing-stage to the shore. On either side of the bridge, and along the banks of the river, is the market-place, if so it may be called. Having chartered two carriages, one for myself and another for my

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luggage, I proceeded to ascend the precipitous road leading to the town. Having reached the top, I drove to Annéeff's hotel at the corner of a large, deserted-looking, ill-paved square in the centre of the town. The exterior of the inn—the best in the place—was not inviting, whereas the interior was a mixture of tawdry magnificence and disgusting filth.

The town of Samara, although it had a population of nearly forty thousand, appeared to me to consist of nothing but this one square and a street in which there was one shop, apparently prepared to supply all the wants of the town, from jewellery to insect powder, the two most conspicuous articles in the window. The other thoroughfares, which branched off from the main street, were mere broad, dusty lanes flanked by one-storied houses, the usual characteristic of a Russian provincial town.

The square itself looked like a wilderness, with a row of droshkis (cabs) drawn up across the centre, an hotel at each corner, and a few agricultural implements standing outside a merchant's door. Wishing to visit the market, I descended the hill to the landing-place.

Here, along the banks of the river, stretched rows of dirty wooden sheds, in which articles of every description—meat, fish, bread, vegetables, melons—were exposed for sale. In addition to these shanties, numerous barges connected with the shore by planks formed as many floating shops on the river. Some were covered in, and

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contained goods from all parts of the Empire; while others filled with water formed admirable reservoirs for the keeping of live fish. One could not but be struck by the uncivilised, filthy appearance of this great commercial centre, which, now that it was united to Orenburg by a line of railway, had become more important than ever, especially on account of its connection with the trade of Central Asia.

It is at Samara that one first becomes acquainted with a vehicle called a 'tarantass,' and which is much used on the steppes. Imagine a huge basket cradle, capable of holding two full-grown persons, placed on three longitudinal poles, the latter resting at one end on the axletree of the front wheels, and at the other on that of the hind wheels, and a box-seat in front, and you have a tarantass. The poles are the substitutes for springs, and the whole arrangement is both practical and comfortable. It is at Samara that the steppes may be said to commence. Returning from the market, it was time to drive to the station in order to continue the journey by rail to Orenburg. Like most Russian stations, that at Samara was situated some little distance from the town, and looked more fitted to be the London station of one of our most important lines, than the terminus of a wretched single line of rails, on which there were only six daily trains with an average speed of ten miles an hour. The train left Samara at four in the afternoon; there were no first-class carriages, and the

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second were filled to overflowing. In the train there happened to be one of the engineers who had been employed in the construction of the line. The train being crowded, I was glad to take refuge on the small iron platform which connected my carriage with the next, and from which I had a capital view of the country we traversed. The steppes are a vast expanse of undulating, and for the most part uncultivated, land, destitute of trees; in fact, a desert without sand. Such, before the opening of the Samara-Orenburg railway, was the aspect of the country lying between these two towns. During the few years, however, that the railway had been working, an immense change had taken place, and I was told that the land was now cultivated for a distance of some forty miles on both sides of the line for a considerable portion of its length. One of the chief features of the country we journeyed through was the countless acres of the sunflower plant in full bloom, a sight not to be forgotten, and the grandeur of which was most impressing. Soon after we had started, my engineer friend pointed out to me a curious geological phenomenon in the shape of a moving hill. It appears that this hill consisted of quicksand, and changed its position annually, and always in the same direction. Since the previous year it had advanced some 150 yards. About an hour's journey from Orenburg brought us to the 'scientific frontier,' drawn by the command of the Empress Catherine

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between Europe and Asia, and which had now been abandoned for one further to the east. Near Samara game is plentiful, partridges, ducks, and 'doubles' being found in great quantities. Wolves also abound in this neighbourhood.

On the following morning, about eleven, after a journey of twenty hours, we approached Orenburg. As seen from the north-west it irresistibly reminded me of the camp at Aldershot, with its church, huts, and tents, there being a military encampment just outside the town. As we got nearer, however, and the minaret of the caravanserai, with innumerable windmills in the background, opened out, the aspect changed, and when the train steamed slowly into the station, through picturesque groups of camels and their drivers, all resemblance to Aldershot disappeared, and I felt that I had at last reached the 'threshold of Asia.'

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CHAPTER VIII

ORENBURG

THE city of Orenburg is of comparatively recent date, it having been founded in 1735. When, a little more than a century ago, Tougatcheff escaped from his prison at Kazan, he went to Orenburg, which then became the centre of his revolutionary enterprises. After overrunning and devastating the Volga provinces, and menacing Moscow itself, he was finally defeated by the troops of the Empress Catherine in 1775, and died on the scaffold. Until quite lately the town of Orenburg was the headquarters of the military district bearing its name, and was administered by a governor-general.

Some years ago, before the Russians plunged so deeply into Central Asia, Orenburg was of great military consequence, as the principal outpost of the Empire in that direction; but now that they have pushed their frontiers forward to beyond Samarcand and Merv, it has become, so to speak, an inland town, and has consequently lost much of its former importance. It was from Orenburg that one of the columns marched under General Veriofkine to the invasion of Khiva. In fact,

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Khiva was taken by the Orenburg column, the very formation of which General Kaufmann had so strenuously opposed, not only as unnecessary, but as incapable of co-operating with him, on account of the difficulties of the road. Orenburg having lost its *raison d'être* as a place of strategical importance on account of the rapid advance of Russia into Central Asia, advantage was taken by Alexander III. of some flagrant acts of rascality and peculation discovered in the official circles of the place, in order to abolish the military district of which it was the centre. General Krijanoffski, the governor-general, was recalled, his place done away with, and his employés scattered to the winds. It is only fair to say that the general himself does not appear to have been implicated directly in the wholesale frauds which had come to light, but he was, of course, held responsible for the thieving propensities of his subordinates. On my arrival I found the place in a great state of agitation, caused by the general exodus of dismissed officials, whose indignation at losing their profitable places knew no bounds. The refreshment-room at the station was crowded with these gentlemen in their different uniforms, and all of them 'out of work.'

Orenburg is a curious mixture of St. Petersburg and Moscow, of Europe and the East. The large, dusty, unpaved squares, surrounded by government buildings of huge dimensions,

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reminded one of St. Petersburg, while the streets, with their low detached houses and small gardens, recalled Moscow. Generally speaking, everything that was ugly savoured of St. Petersburg, and all that was picturesque and bright brought back recollections of Moscow. I had previously announced my intended visit to my friend Prince Dolgorouki, who lived in the steppes some thirty miles beyond Orenburg, so on my arrival I found his son waiting for me at the station with two carriages, one for ourselves and another for the luggage.

Both these vehicles, one of which was a tarantass, were drawn by what is called a 'troïka,' a team of three horses abreast. The centre animal, the one in the shafts, should be a fast trotter. On either side of him another is attached by means of a trace and a strap fastened to his bridle which, while admitting of great freedom, prevents his running too much out from the shaft horse. It is the business of the two outside horses to gallop while their companion in the shafts trots, and they are trained to do so with their heads low and turned outwards. The coachman, or 'yemstchik,' as he is called, drives the centre horse in the usual manner, having only a check-rein to each of the others, who otherwise take care of themselves. When the road is clear they spread out like a fan, and when they see anything coming, or have to pass through a gate or narrow place, they run in of their own accord, for, having no blinkers, they can see everything that is going on around

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them. It is a notorious fact that when horses in Russia get into difficulties they are much quieter and less subject to fright than is the case with us. I have frequently seen as many as four or six horses down at a time after a collision in the streets, and lying in an almost indistinguishable mass, but they remain perfectly quiet, allowing those who endeavour to help them to move about among them without fear of being kicked. I have often heard this sensible behaviour of Russian horses attributed to the climate, which is supposed to have a quieting effect on them. I, however, am much more inclined to explain the fact by the absence of blinkers. A Russian horse always sees everything that is going on. He therefore treats with indifference things and noises which would otherwise frighten him, and when he gets into a scrape, which he has probably foreseen, thanks to the free use of his eyes, he knows perfectly well what has occurred, and keeps quiet until people come to his assistance.

While still in the station Prince Dolgorouki's son apologised to me, in anticipation, for the slow pace at which we should be compelled to travel, on account of one of the coachmen being very drunk. His only consolation was that he had been able to keep the other sober—no easy matter when Russian coachmen are exposed to the temptations of a town, if only for an hour. When, however, we attempted to make a start,

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we found that the 'sober' one was the more intoxicated of the two, he having profited by the temporary absence of his master to imbibe copiously of vodka or corn brandy, the curse of the Russian peasant. He was so bad that we were compelled to leave him behind. I mention this episode as being characteristic of everyday life in Russia. As we drove through the streets many signs of the general official stampede were visible. Neglected buildings, empty guard-houses and tenantless sentry-boxes, all told their tale, and there was a general deserted appearance which gave a melancholy aspect to the town. The variety of dress was most striking. First one would meet, say, a Russian merchant with his long cloth coat and cap of the same material. Then, perched high on a camel's back, would be seen approaching the form of a Kirghiz, in his fur cap and dirty caftan, swinging backwards and forwards in monotonous harmony with the animal's clumsy gait. Next, either riding or in a cart, one would meet a dark, keen-eyed Khivan or Bokhariot clad in his silken coat of many colours, and with a cut-throat expression on his face.

A little further on a number of camels, some standing, some lying down, and some uttering that low, wailing cry so pitiful to hear, surrounded by groups of their turbaned drivers, would denote the resting-place of some passing caravan.

A few minutes' drive through the streets

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brought us to the river Ural, which, flowing past the outskirts of Orenburg, forms the boundary of Asia. The course of the stream here was prettily marked by trees growing on its banks. The river was spanned by an old, creaky, dangerous wooden bridge which, at the time of our crossing, was crowded with traffic of every description. On the other side of the river commenced Central Asia and the Kirghiz Steppes. The view of Orenburg from this side was most picturesque. The town sloped down to the stream like a bank of foliage, thickly interspersed with low white houses, the monotony of which was broken by the varied and many-coloured cupolas of numerous churches; and in the midst of all, the slender white minaret of the caravanserai rose, as it were, in graceful opposition to its many rivals of a hostile church. The Kirghizes of the lesser horde are Mussulman nomads. Both men and women have dark, swarthy complexions, large, round faces, high cheek-bones, and small black eyes. The former wear long sack-like garments over a shirt and loose breeches. Their hats are of felt in the shape of an inverted cornucopia, with the broad end turned up like a sleeve. Some wear round cloth caps with broad borders of common fur. A kind of hood covering the cap is also frequently worn, and gives a weird appearance to the figure. The men's heads are shaved, and they wear scanty beards. The boys' apparel is somewhat light,

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consisting of either nothing at all, or of a shirt open in front. The women also wear sack-like garments, sometimes ornamented in front. The headdress is a white turban, and round the chin hangs a white cloth of the same material, encircling the lower part of the face and joining the turban in front of the ears, which are entirely hidden. This refers only to the lower classes. The rich wear dresses of costly material, and caps of velvet embroidered with beads. The wealth of a Kirghiz consists of his camels, sheep, cattle, and horses, and it is his delight to wander about over the immense expanse of steppe in search of fresh pasture for his herds and flocks.

In former days these nomads roamed about at will, but now that the Russian Government has organised them in 'volosts,' their wanderings are limited to certain tracts, each volost having a portion of territory allotted to it. In summer they live in 'kibitkas,' large, circular, felt tents, resembling a beefsteak pudding both in shape and colour. Some of the Kirghizes live in these tents even in winter, but others prefer subterranean hovels. Their meat is mutton and horse-flesh, and their drink 'koumiss,' or fermented mare's milk. As the great summer fair was being held in the Minovoi Dvor, or barter-court, about five miles from Orenburg and on the way to our destination, I had an opportunity of visiting it. On the road we met representatives of every part of Central Asia, either going to or returning from

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the fair. Some rode on camels, some were in carts, some walked, and some were perched on vehicles much resembling an Irish car.

Occasionally two persons, a man and a woman, would be seen on the same camel, the latter sitting behind. Russians, Circassians, and Cossacks also took their places in the busy throng, and little naked Kirghiz urchins ran by the side of our tarantass, like the Cockney street arab, in hopes of a copper. Of all the conveyances we met, a very low cart drawn by a camel was certainly the most comical. The Minovoi Dvor is an enormous yard, some 250 yards square, surrounded by a high wall. In the centre of the side facing you as you approach from Orenburg is the entrance, a large gateway surmounted by the Imperial eagle. Over the gate is the guardroom, from the roof of which flies the commercial flag of Russia.

Entering the gate you find yourself in a vast, dusty enclosure, in the centre of which is a square block of buildings with a colonnade at the base. All round the walls are spirit-shops, eating-houses, etc. The whole area was thronged with people eager to do business, some on foot, some riding, and all combining with their tongues to make the place a veritable Babel. To the left was a herd of horses surrounded by both sellers and purchasers. No sooner was an animal trotted and galloped through the crowd to show its paces, than another would be produced by a rival dealer endeavouring at the top of his voice to prove that his animal

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was the better of the two, and striving all the time to slap hands with the purchaser—the sign of a concluded bargain. One slap, however, is not sufficient—a series, sometimes as many as twenty, the last being so hearty as to leave no room for doubt, being requisite to make the agreement binding. Just beyond this Eastern Tattersall's was a herd of cattle, and, walking round the back of the central block, I came to a large flock of the most curious sheep I had ever seen. They had no tails, and their hind quarters swayed to and fro as they moved from sheer weight of the fat they carried. These sheep yield about fifty pounds of tallow apiece. In other parts of the square were endless bales of cotton and wool from Khiva and Bokhara. Three sides of the colonnade surrounding the central block were devoted to the trade of Central Asia, and the fourth to goods of Russian manufacture. The shops of the colonnade, small and vaulted, were filled to overflowing, with masses of goods piled up outside. In the first, carpets from Bokhara were the principal articles, while outside hung bright-coloured bands of a like material used for the decoration of 'kibitkas,' the native tents. The Bokharan carpets are superior to the Persian, both in colour and design, and are made in great variety. The next shop I came to answered to that of a tailor in Europe, for it was filled with caftans (the dressing-gown garment worn throughout Central Asia) of every description, some of

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silk, showing all colours of the rainbow, and others of more sombre hues and different material. Next came a barber's shop, in which a Kirghiz, lying flat on his back, was going through the operation of having his head shaved. Further on was a sweetmeat shop, in which dried fruits and nuts seemed the staple commodities. Next door was a store for swords and daggers, common and ornamental, and in the shop beyond were pots and pans of all shapes and sizes. Groups of Bokharan and Khivan merchants were hanging about the doors of these shops trying to induce passers-by to purchase. The amount of business annually transacted at this fair is very great. All the caravans from Central Asia stop there, and start on their return journey from the same place. Having thus hurriedly visited this interesting place, I returned to my friend, who had been obliged to remain with the carriages lest the drunken coachman should become even more intoxicated. About a mile further on we reached a Kirghiz encampment. This was an 'aoul' or village, all the inhabitants of which earn their living by making the framework of kibitkas. Close to the encampment was a specimen of a winter village, each underground hovel being indicated by its roof and rude chimney protruding from the earth. Right and left of the track as we galloped along across the undulating plain, as far as the eye could reach, were endless herds of horses and cattle, intermixed with flocks of sheep grazing on the

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pastures of this vast expanse of virgin soil. Close to the road we passed two Kirghizes asleep on the ground, while their horses, saddled and bridled, but perfectly free, were quietly grazing some hundred yards away. Every now and then the long line of camels forming a caravan might be seen in the distance, plodding wearily over the plain at a pace which made one wonder whether it could by any possibility ever reach its destination. We met several horsemen on the road, most of whom carried matchlocks swung across their backs. They would stop and look curiously at our European dress as we passed, and then continue their journey. A four hours' drive brought us to my friend Prince Michael Dolgorouki's house —an oasis in the desert—a bright little spot of activity and cultivation in this vast expanse of uncultivated land. My first glimpse of Michaeloffka (for the place was called after the Prince) was most refreshing after a long drive over the desert steppe. Just before reaching it we passed through a small village of Orenburg Cossacks which, I was told, was a good specimen of the state of degeneration which the Orenburg Cossacks in general had reached, owing to their inordinate love of drink. They did nothing themselves, but hired Kirghizes to do their work for them, and spent all the money realised by their land and horses on vodka, the cheapness of which admits of its being drunk in very large quantities. The general appearance of Michaeloffka as we approached it

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showed that, whatever indolence might exist elsewhere in the steppe, there, at any rate, everybody was busy. The house was prettily situated in front of a range of hills, covered with rich crops of ripening corn. In front of it was a small lake with an island in the centre. Close to the lake stood a picturesque little mill, by the side of a wooden bridge leading across a stream. The house itself was built entirely of stone, there being no trees in the steppes, and, with its outhouses, etc., formed the front side of the large yard which stretched out behind it. In front was a large verandah, common to most Russian country houses, and which always gives them an appearance of comfort.

The land on which Michaeloffka is built was given to Prince Dolgorouki by the Russian Government for a period of twenty-five years on condition that he should there found a horse-breeding establishment, with a view to the production of cavalry and artillery horses, and to the general improvement of horse-breeding in that part of the country. Prince Dolgorouki only commenced operations a little more than two years before I visited him, and considering that he was then given nothing but the land, entirely devoid of anything in the shape of house or farm, it was quite wonderful to see the place he had formed in so short a time. He had confined himself to building his house and premises, to the purchase of stallions and mares, and to

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the introduction of agriculture—hitherto almost unknown in these regions, where bread is not eaten, and the food of the people consists of horse-flesh and mare's milk. Although he had already got a few yearlings, and even two-year-olds, the Michaeloffka establishment was still in its infancy. Very comical scenes took place when electric bells were first put up at Michaeloffka. The Kirghiz workmen employed to fix them firmly believed that they were worked by some superhuman agency, and would, after pushing the button, run as fast as they could to the hall in the hope of being in time to see the bell moved by some mysterious agency. When Prince Dolgorouki's first thrashing-machine arrived, his people declined to use it until a priest had performed a religious ceremony, and called upon the devil to come out of it. Notwithstanding all the vexations which the Prince was daily subjected to on account of the idleness and intemperance of his Russian labourers, he had not only succeeded in starting a horse-breeding centre which had every prospect of a brilliant future, but had also shown the people in his vicinity the advantages and profits to be derived from farming.

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CHAPTER IX

HORSE-CATCHING

It had been arranged that on the day after my arrival at Michaeloffka, we should drive some little distance further into the steppe in order that I should see the house of a rich Kirghiz and gain an insight into steppe life among the more wealthy natives. Having some distance to go, we started early. A Russian gentleman, formerly an officer in the army, and who had spent the greater part of his life in Central Asia, having been to Khiva and Bokhara several times, kindly accompanied me. I could have wished for no better companion or guide, for so highly was he thought of among the Kirghizes of these parts that they had elected him as judge not only in their quarrels with the Russians, but also in disputes among themselves. He told me that he had no difficulty in dealing with them in such cases, and that they invariably respected his decision and looked upon it as final. It is needless to say that he spoke their language fluently. I was also most fortunate in the selection of the day on which to pay my visit to Tchimir-Akhal-Bek (the name of the rich Kirghiz), for it was the day after Ramazan,

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when Mussulmen break their long fast for the first time. Consequently a great feast had been prepared, not only for himself, family, and servants, but also for friends and inferiors, many of whom had ridden great distances in order to be present at the fête. We were also accompanied by several friends of the 'judge,' as I must call him, having completely forgotten his name. Some of us rode, some drove in a tarantass, while a tandem in an English dogcart was confided to my care. After driving about five miles we arrived at a stone quarry, at the base of which ran a deep ravine, which, fortune favouring us, we safely crossed. As we passed the quarry several large eagles were soaring high above us. The tandem was evidently a novelty to the few horsemen we met on the road, and as to the enormous hawks which infest the country, they appeared to be so fascinated by it that they would perch on stones close by and watch us as we passed. About five miles further on we first came in sight of the settlement. Two separate houses of the same shape and size, and resembling the farmhouse in a box of toys, stood facing us, and about thirty yards apart. Some fifty paces in front of the gap which separated them was a large wooden gate of Russian design and painted in different colours. The purpose for which the gate was placed there was not evident, for there was no wall or fence to render such a thing necessary, but I afterwards discovered that it had been erected as an ornament.

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The houses which formed the centre of this curious settlement were surrounded by kibitkas (tents), resembling, as I said before, a beefsteak pudding, both in shape and colour. Between us and the 'aoul' or village lay a deep, dried-up watercourse with precipitous banks, forming a circular moat in front of the habitations. As we approached, everything seemed busy and alive within this natural fortification. Our approach had evidently been reported, and preparations were being made for our reception. The sight as we neared the moat was most picturesque. A vast plain around us as far as the eye could reach, and above a cloudless sky, from which the sun shone brightly on the light-hued dresses of the different groups of men as they stood about within the *enceinte* awaiting our arrival. To our right were some twenty camels and dromedaries, tended by a herd, while away to the left hundreds of wild horses were grazing peacefully under the midday sun. We received our first welcome from a weird horseman, who galloped out to meet us. Several others quickly joined him, and surrounded by this wild-looking escort we arrived at the watercourse. Here we left our carriages and crossed the moat on foot, our guides leading. Our appearance excited the curiosity of a baby camel, which galloped up and watched us for some time with evident interest. Etiquette in Kirghiz-land is strictly attended to. Instead of our host coming out at once to welcome us, we were first met by all the

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principal male members of his household, who came forth one by one, the juniors first. Each as he approached us stopped, raised his cap, and making a low bow shook us severally by the hand, after which he made room for the next and himself joined our now rapidly increasing escort. When within a few yards of the house, which was surrounded by a crowd of guests and menials, we were welcomed by Tchimir-Akhal-Bek himself. He was a short, stout man of about fifty, with a round, fat, cheery-looking face of the Tartar type. His head was shaved, and he had no hair on his face save a scanty beard. He was dressed in a long, light brown caftan made of camel's hair, and fastened by a girdle at the waist. He wore a circular cap of beautiful beaver, about four or five inches deep, with a blue velvet top. He spoke Russian tolerably well, and seemed delighted to see us. We were quickly surrounded by about a hundred Kirghizes, quite as much interested in us as we were in them. The majority were dirty, wild-looking creatures, clad in a sack-like material, and wearing caps and hoods of various shapes. Some of the superior members of the household, however, were much more respectable-looking, and wore caftans of many-coloured silk from the looms of Khiva and Bokhara. Suddenly the crowd around us opened out, and a diminutive boy, about seven years of age, rode up on a beautiful roan pony. He was Tchimir's son, evidently the pride of the family. He was lifted

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off his pony and then shook hands with us all in turn. One of the most prominent members of the establishment was the mullah, or priest, a clever-looking young man, with sharp, penetrating eyes, and a look which scarcely inspired confidence. He held the appointment of private chaplain to Tchimir, and appeared to feel superior to his companions and, perhaps, a trifle ashamed of his position. He scanned us all with his quick, nervous eyes, as if determined to learn all he could of European life from our visit, however short. He also spoke Russian fairly well. Having looked around us for a while, we were invited by Tchimir to follow him into the right-hand house in which he himself lived. A short flight of steps led up to a diminutive hall, in which were several bright vessels of brass used for washing purposes. A door opposite opened into the principal room, divided by a chintz curtain from an inner chamber. The floor was well covered with Bokharan rugs of the finest quality, and round the room were several ordinary Viennese chairs. On the wall hung prints of the roughest nature, the two most striking of which represented Constantinople and Mecca—at least so Tchimir said—but they might have represented anything. On one side of the room was a table, and on the other a mass of boxes of different colours, shapes, and sizes, containing clothes, etc., piled one on the top of the other. Although chairs had been provided for us, the 'judge' set the

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example of squatting on the carpet, which we quickly followed. Plates of dried fruits, pistachios enveloped in sugar, nuts and raisins were then handed to us, as also a wooden bowl of koumiss (fermented mare's milk). We were then taken to see the mares milked. Several mounted Kirghiz were sent out to drive them in. Women, provided with pails, then went straight into the herd and commenced milking. The milking over, we were again taken back to the house for tea. It was after this that the real interest of the day commenced. Four horsemen, including Tchimir's little son, were sent out to drive in a herd of wild horses which were grazing miles away. When this was done I was asked by Tchimir to select any one amongst them which I should like to see caught and backed for the first time. Having made my choice, I pointed the animal out to a mounted Kirghiz, who was told to secure it. I should here say that the men employed in catching horses are always mounted on animals of superior speed, and that they carry a lasso of a peculiar kind. It consists of a long supple pole twelve feet in length and tapering to the end. One end of a stout leather thong is attached to the top of the pole, and the other some four feet down, thus forming a loop. I no sooner had pointed out the horse I had chosen than the Kirghiz plunged into the middle of the herd, which immediately started off at best pace, keeping together. On he pressed through the gallop-

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ing mass until he got up to the animal he was pursuing, and then leaning forward slipped the loop over its head. Having done this he at once commenced to twist the pole round and round in his hands until the loop became so tightly screwed up round the poor brute's neck that it was compelled to stop, the remainder of the herd disappearing in the distance. Having succeeded in stopping the horse, the Kirghiz threw himself back in the saddle and commenced drawing his victim to him hand over hand, keeping the loop tightly screwed up about its neck, being materially assisted by his own horse, who, understanding the business, planted his forefeet into the ground and threw all his weight into the scale in favour of his rider. At the conclusion of this equestrian tug of war, and when the captured horse was securely held by his pursuer, another Kirghiz approached, bridle in hand. This was the rough-rider, whose duty it was to slip the bridle over the ears of the animal, put the bit into its mouth, and vault on to its bare back. No sooner was the bridle on than the first horseman untwisted the loop of his lasso and slipped it off over the horse's head. At the same time, however, he seized its tail with his right hand, and passing it quickly under his thigh, grasped it firmly with his left hand, the tail thus being secured between his thigh and the saddle. The object of this was to give the rough-rider a chance of jumping on to the horse's back, and as soon as he did so, the

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tail was released, and horse and rider were left to fight out their battle between them on the open plain. At first the poor animal, completely terrified and trembling in every limb, endeavoured to rid himself of the Kirghiz by plunging, rearing, and buck-jumping, but all to no purpose. Although the man was riding bareback, no effort of the animal to unseat him had the slightest effect, until in pure desperation and mad with fear it threw itself down and rolled on the earth. The Kirghiz quietly placed his right foot on the ground as the animal fell, and disengaging his left, stood beside it as it rolled over and over, vaulting on to its back as it at last rose to its feet. No sooner was it on its legs again than the horse, now furious, started off at full speed. This was, of course, exactly what the Kirghiz wanted, and, taking advantage of some rising ground, he urged the infuriated animal to its utmost speed with whip and voice. Symptoms of distress soon showed themselves, but the more exhausted the horse became the more it was thrashed and compelled to gallop, till in about twenty minutes it was ridden back to us perfectly tame and quiet, the result of the finest piece of horsemanship it has ever been my good fortune to witness.

Our host was now particularly anxious to show us three brown horses which he had selected as a 'troïka' for Prince Dolgorouki. Two of them were lassoed and secured without

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much difficulty, but the third succeeded for a time in baffling all attempts to get near him. After being separated from the herd he started off at full gallop, followed by three Kirghizes who, failing to lasso him, changed their tactics, and commenced to ride him down. Luckily, the pursued horse did not go straight away out of sight, as often happens, but, being continually turned, remained in sight most of the time. At last a Kirghiz with a fresh horse galloped up behind him, and seizing his tail acted as a drag, which enabled another to come up alongside and lasso him.

When we returned to the house the feast had commenced, and some hundred Kirghizes were sitting under the wall devouring horse-flesh and washing it down with their beloved koumiss. Tchimir again led the way upstairs, where he regaled us with horse-flesh, which we ate with our fingers, sitting on the floor. After dinner, and a wooden bowl of fermented camel's milk, Tchimir introduced us to the eldest of his three wives, a lady of about fifty, to whom we paid a visit in her tent, which was a particularly smart one, carpeted with beautiful Central Asian rugs and adorned with many-coloured chests. The other wives we were not invited to see, although I must confess to having caught a glimpse of one of them—I should say the youngest—as she stood behind the chintz curtain in Tchimir's house.

It was now time to leave, and Tchimir, desiring to drive with me part of the way in the

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dogcart, ordered his tarantass to follow. He was delighted with the tandem, and insisted upon driving himself, holding all the reins in the palm of his left hand. On the road he asked me many questions about England, and showed considerable knowledge as to what was going on in Afghanistan. He had been to Mecca, Constantinople, Khiva, Bokhara, and Persia, and was very proud of relating his travels. His wealth consisted of some three thousand horses, one thousand head of cattle, and fifty camels. After we had gone a few miles, Tchimir left me and returned in his tarantass to his home. I remained at Michaeloffka for about a fortnight, and enjoyed my visit there immensely. I then returned to Russia.

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CHAPTER X

SPORT

THE Russians are not sportsmen in the sense that Austrians and Englishmen are. There are, of course, a few exceptions, but as a rule the Russian sportsman confines himself to the stalking of capercailie and the shooting of black game in the early breeding-season. It may be as well to describe the capercailie stalking, as I have found few Englishmen who have ever heard of it. A very early start must be made, so as to reach the woods considerably before daylight. At dawn the cocks commence to call their mates, and after a few preliminary notes they break into a song which lasts some seconds, during which time they are absolutely deaf. Hence the Russian name for capercailie, viz. 'gloohoi,' which means 'deaf.'

The only art of the sportsman is to approach the bird during the period of his song when he is incapable of hearing any noise, however loud, whereas when not singing the breaking of a twig or the cracking of the ice on a puddle is enough to frighten him away. The easiest method of approaching the tree in which he sits is by a series

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of jumps with both feet at the same time made while he is singing, care being taken to cease jumping before his song ends. With good luck the tree should be reached in this manner in about twenty minutes, and here ends whatever excitement this sport may claim, as the only difficulty is to get up to the bird, it being easy enough to shoot it sitting when within easy range. So absolutely deaf is the cock capercailie while singing that I have seen one shot at and missed, owing to the thickness of the branches, without the bird moving, and shot dead by the same person during his next song some few minutes later. The shooting of black game is, if possible, even a tamer affair. Before daylight you go to a wood where an underground hut has been built with a thatched roof above-ground, which roof is loop-holed in different directions. The hut is situated near some open place in the vicinity of a wood where the blackcock and their mates are accustomed to disport themselves in the early morning. As soon as the birds come down, they are shot on the ground, and the object is to get as many as possible with one shot.

The sport which would be most likely to interest Englishmen is bear-shooting, and, as I happened to be present on the only occasion on which a bear was killed by night, I will here give a description of the adventure, but before doing so it will be well to relate the ordinary method of bear-shooting in Russia.

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In most villages a certain number of peasants are hunters by nature, and in many cases they make a very considerable sum of money by tracking and finally 'ringing' bears, which they sell to a party of sportsmen who come from St. Petersburg or elsewhere for the purpose of shooting them.

In the early autumn, when the snow first begins to fall, a bear commences to look out for a suitable place in which to hibernate. As soon as a peasant hunter, such as I have alluded to, finds in the snow the track of a bear, he immediately turns sharp to his right or left and makes an enormous circle, eventually returning to the spot from which he started. If, whilst making the ring, he again comes across the track of the same bear, he knows that he is still on the move, and at once proceeds to make another circle as before. This may perhaps take him a whole day, and even then the probability is that so early in the season he will not succeed in what is called 'ringing' the bear, in which case he repeats the same manœuvres day after day until he has been able to complete a circle, no part of which has the animal traversed. He is then sure that, for the time at least, the bear is within a certain defined area. His task being so far accomplished, the hunter returns to his village, but takes care not to mention the fact of his having ringed a bear to a single soul, unless it be to some fellow-hunter in his village with whom he has arranged a sort of sporting partnership, to which also are frequently admitted

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hunters of other and even distant places. These all agree to work together and in secret for the common object of ringing a certain number of bears, say from five to ten, which being accomplished, one of their number is despatched to St. Petersburg to sell all the bears ringed, generally to a syndicate of sportsmen. In former days, and, I imagine, it is very much the same now, a peasant would sell bears to any gentleman whom he knew without the signature of any contract, but I have known cases where the matter was considered of such importance by the peasant that the buyer and seller appeared before a magistrate in order to sign the contract in his presence. It is always a part of the arrangement that every bear shown by the peasant should be paid for whether killed or not. A bear rarely lies down for good until there have been several thaws and the hard winter has actually set in. As I said before, when the early snow appears he begins to move about in search of a lair, and having found one, lies down for the winter. If, however, which frequently happens in early winter, a thaw supervenes, and the snow begins to melt over and around him, he moves again, and it is not until he is undisturbed by melting snow or any other such discomfort that he is sure to remain in the place he has chosen. Meanwhile, every morning and evening the peasant who found him walks round the old beaten track, and when he has done so for a considerable period without seeing a trace of bruin having traversed

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any portion of the ring, he is certain that the bear is within it, although in the great majority of cases he is in absolute ignorance of the exact spot which the bear occupies within the circle. Sometimes a peasant having entered a forest in search of fuel will come across the lair itself, in which case he is spared the daily anxiety and monotony of walking the ring as before described. A very favourite spot for a bear to choose in which to hibernate is under a fallen tree, one that has been either blown down or burned in some forest fire. This, with its branches, makes the foundation for the roof, which is subsequently completed by the frozen snow. Let us suppose that seven or eight bears are 'ringed.' The first would probably be some fifty miles from the nearest railway station, and as the others would in all probability be some ten or twelve miles apart, the chances are that the expedition, say for seven bears, would last about three days; that is, three beats might perhaps be made in one day, and two on each of the others. Leaving St. Petersburg by an evening train, the purchaser of the bears, accompanied by five or six friends, would arrive at some station at about midnight. There they would find a number of sledges ready to convey them to the village nearest the first bear. The sledges resemble long cradles, and have no seats, but are filled with hay on which two people can lie at full length. Having driven to that portion of the forest in which the bear is, the party is met by the peasant who arranged

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the expedition. The guns are then placed by him at intervals of about two hundred yards along part of the ring, the whole of which has been rendered quite hard and easy to walk upon by the daily march of the peasants round it in order to make sure that the bear has not by any chance moved to another place. The remainder of the circle is completed by beaters placed very close together, and reaching from the right-hand gun on one side to the left-hand gun on the other. It will thus be seen that the peasants' track, which forms the ring, is completely surrounded by guns and beaters, the former at a very considerable distance apart, the latter as near to each other as possible. As soon as a gun has been placed, his first object is to find a favourable place for shooting, should the bear come in his direction, and the most convenient of all is a small open space about ten yards square. Having chosen his place, the gun should make a screen of branches in front of him, which occupation will have the double effect of keeping him warm while waiting for the commencement of the beat, and of hiding him from the bear when the beat begins, should the animal come his way. All being now ready (the preparations for the beat take frequently more than an hour to complete), two or three peasants enter the ring from the side furthest from the guns in order to awaken the bear either by the discharge of a maroon or the firing of guns. This is the signal for the entire line of beaters, excepting those who

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are in close proximity to the flank guns, to commence yelling and shouting, which they continue to do during the whole time the beat lasts. They do not advance, but remain stationary, their object being by shouting or other noises to induce the bear to break through the ring where the guns await him. If the bear is not soon on foot, the most speedy manner in which to arouse him is to let loose a number of small terriers. These very soon find the lair, after which their continual yapping indicates the direction in which they are pursuing. Travelling light on the top of the snow, while the ponderous weight of the bear drives him deeply into it, the terriers are enabled to keep close to their quarry, and their constant worrying before long induces it to make up its mind to break away. Seeking to escape, and frightened by the shouts of the beaters, the animal naturally makes towards the line of guns, by whose complete silence he is deceived. It is now that the excitement commences. Rifles are cocked, and every ear is strained towards the yapping terriers. One of the guns hears them approaching, then is momentarily disappointed as they turn right or left instead of coming straight towards him. Again there is a change, the voices of the dogs become louder, and soon there is a curious noise which will be remembered by any one who has ever heard it, namely a slow, heavy crashing through wood and the deep breathing of the hunted bear, who, having forced his way through

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the underwood, in an exhausted condition, at last appears, a huge, rolling, ungainly mass on the small open space in front of the screen. Now is the time to fire, and if the bullet takes effect either in head or shoulder, there is little further trouble, but in most cases a second bullet is advisable. Most Englishmen would, I imagine, consider two double-barrelled rifles, one leant against a tree, and a good large hunting-knife, sufficient armament for an expedition of this sort. I have, however, seen men come out with four rifles, a dagger, and a revolver, and not unfrequently accompanied by half a dozen men armed with spears. Personally, I always preferred being quite alone with my two rifles, as, in the event of a wounded bear being inclined to be nasty, the gentlemen with the spears almost invariably run away, generally remembering to take your spare rifle with them. Should a wounded bear by chance charge or attack, it is a fatal error to leave the beaten track and endeavour to escape over the deep snow, on which the bear travels faster than a man. While I was in Russia the Turkish ambassador, Rustem Pasha, who subsequently represented Turkey in London, was overtaken and severely mauled by a wounded bear after leaving the track in his haste to escape. Fortunately, the servant of a neighbouring gun came to the rescue, and shot the animal over the ambassador's body. Rustem, however, would have one believe that he had killed bruin single-handed with his dagger. For

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weeks after the occurrence he sat in state at his embassy receiving the visits of all the pretty young women of Russian society. His arms and legs were swathed in bandages, and he explained how he thrust first an arm and then a leg into the bear's mouth in order to save his face, and then, producing a dagger with blade bent double, he would describe how he eventually succeeded in driving it into the brute's heart and thus saved his own life. Before a visitor left, he or she would be invited to examine the bear's skinned carcass in the yard. The object was to show how unerring the ambassador's aim had been, for the body was literally riddled with bullets. This, however, had been overdone, for the entire contents of His Excellency's cartridge-bag would scarcely have accounted for the number of holes in the bear's body.

Having thus roughly described the ordinary method of bear-shooting in Russia, I will relate the anecdote in connection with it to which I before alluded. My usual sporting companion was Prince Dmitri Golitzin, and we preferred making our expeditions unaccompanied by friends, because if many were present when a bear was killed much wrangling invariably followed as to who was the slayer—a great nuisance, only obviated by the reduction of the number of guns to two.

One morning a peasant came to St. Petersburg to inform Golitzin that he had two bears about fifty miles from a station midway between St.

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Petersburg and Moscow. He stated that the nearest of the two bears was 'ringed,' and that he actually knew the position of the lair in which the second, a she-bear with cubs, was hibernating. The second bear, he said, was not more than some eight or ten miles distant from the first. Having come to terms with the peasant for the purchase of both, we started one evening from St. Petersburg and arrived at the station at about midnight. Here sledges were waiting to convey us to the village near which the first bear was 'ringed.' The Prince was accompanied by his personal huntsman, and my English servant Smith, who was particularly anxious to be present at a bear-hunt, was also with us. In intense cold, and after a meagre breakfast, our little caravan of sledges started for the forest at about seven on the following morning. We had agreed that whoever should kill or have the first shot at the 'ringed' bear should allow the other to have the first at the one whose lair was known. With regard to the 'ringed' bear it is not necessary to say more than that it came out to me, and I was fortunate enough to kill it. The right of first shot at the mother of the cubs belonged therefore to my companion. If I remember rightly, my bear was killed about eleven A.M., and with as little delay as possible we started off in our sledges, preceded by our peasant hunter in the direction of the lair. Instead of arriving at our destination in about an hour, as we should have done had the peasant not

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deceived us with regard to the distance, we did not arrive there till six in the evening, when it was of course too dark to undertake any fresh operations. Prince Golitzin was an officer in the Hussars of the Guard, and being due for parade on the next morning but one, it was absolutely necessary that he should return as soon as possible, for we were now some eighty miles from the nearest station. He therefore decided to return at daylight, and suggested my remaining to shoot the bear. As it was evidently a great disappointment to him to have to return by himself, and empty-handed, I was most reluctant to follow his suggestion, and therefore made the counter proposal that we should go to the lair by night, kill the bear, and return together early in the morning. To this he gladly assented, but the difficulty we both foresaw was the certainty that Nicolai, our lying guide, would absolutely refuse so dangerous an undertaking. We therefore told him that as he had lied so with regard to distances he was no doubt also lying about the bear, the existence of which we no longer believed in, and that we had therefore determined to pack up our things and return immediately, leaving him to settle as best he could with the men whom he had engaged, and who would not now be required. Our scheme succeeded admirably, for the first words he said in reply were that not only did he know where the bear was, but that he could take us there blindfold. This was exactly what we

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becoming intense, and so also was the cold. Notwithstanding all Nicolai's assurances, we could neither see nor hear anything indicating the proximity of the bear. All of a sudden Nicolai pointed to what he said was a dark spot some ten yards to our left front. Straining our eyes in the direction, we eventually thought we did see something a shade darker than its surroundings, and at that moment I fancied I heard a curious squeaking noise. My companions also thought they heard something of the sort, and we made up our minds that the squeaking was that of the cubs. In any case, there would be no use waiting any longer, so we agreed to light the torches. Having lit the lantern and closed its door, I proceeded to light the torches carried by two men standing just behind us. Never shall I forget the picturesque sight which their light disclosed, as soon as our eyes became a little accustomed to the glare. Our little party were standing in the midst of magnificent trees, from the snow-laden boughs of which hung giant icicles of fantastic shape. The pure white snow at our feet, reflecting the flames of the flaring torches, helped to light up the weird surroundings and to reveal the terrified faces of our peasant attendants. The eyes of all were now straining in the direction from which the sound of the cubs had been heard. We were very soon made aware that the dark spot pointed out by Nicolai was indeed the hiding-place of the bear we were seeking, by the sudden appearance

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of her fine head emerging from the centre of it. At that moment Prince Golitzin put up his rifle. A second later his bullet struck the animal between the eyes, and she fell lifeless on her side before having even had time to entirely leave her den. It was a fine shot and a fortunate one, for scarcely did the animal fall than our friends carrying the torches ran away with them and made a hasty retreat to the sledges, so that we were left with nothing but the dim light of our wretched lantern. A she-bear with cubs is an ugly customer at the best of times, even when unwounded. It may easily be imagined what would have been our position had she, wounded, attacked us under the circumstances in which we were, and having to defend ourselves as best we could by such light as a horn-sided lantern could afford. It is true that our improvised torches were nearly three-quarters burned out when the men ran away. But the extra half-minute or so they would have burned would, of course, have enabled us, had she moved after the first shot, to put another bullet or two into her. The cubs we took alive, and with the greatest difficulty and labour eventually got the dead bear safely on to our largest sledge. We then proceeded home as fast as we could, and after a hurried breakfast set out on our return journey, much elated by the success of our enterprise. Some few weeks afterwards, at a ball at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, the Emperor Alexander approached

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me at supper, saying, 'I hear what you and Golitzin have been about. It is the first time that a bear has been killed in my country by night, and it shall be the last. Your enterprise was foolhardy in the extreme. However, I congratulate you. It must indeed have been exciting.'

In conclusion, I would say that my companion was, many years ago, a well-known man in Leicestershire, where he rode hard to hounds. He speaks English like an Englishman, and after having greatly distinguished himself in the command of a brigade of cavalry in Asia Minor during the last Russo-Turkish war, he was made, and still is, head of all the Imperial sporting establishments in Russia.

A curious coincidence with regard to bear-shooting occurred some years ago at Constantinople. Five ambassadors of the Great Powers met one day in conference, and every one of them had been mauled by a bear. Sir Henry Elliot, Count Ignatieff, and Rustem Pasha were among them, but I cannot call to mind the names of the other two.

Wolf-hunting is of course the national sport of Russia, and as the Borzoi or Russian wolfhound has of late years attracted much attention in England, I will briefly state how they are used for sporting purposes in their own country.

Suppose that a wolf is known to be in a certain wood. The hunters, mounted on Cossack horses,

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and each having one or two borzois in leash, are stationed in the open at some distance from the wood, and about three hundred yards apart. A huntsman then enters the covert from the other side with a few couple of rough foxhounds, who soon find the wolf and drive him out towards the borzois, who are then slipped. It generally takes two good dogs to hold a full-grown wolf until the hunter gallops up to despatch him with a knife, but one dog has been known to do so single-handed.

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CHAPTER XI

MALPRACTICES

WHEN Russia went to war with Turkey in 1877 I had already been at St. Petersburg for some years, and having had ample time to learn something of the general state of the Russian army, I did not entirely agree with those who looked upon the defeat of the Turks as a certainty.

On the contrary, I thought it not improbable that the Turks would be victorious, and had Mehemet Ali been more active, and Suleiman Pasha less unscrupulous, that campaign might indeed have had very different results.

When the order for mobilisation was issued, it soon became evident that Russia had not profited by the lessons of the Crimean War.

She had, of course, more or less advanced with the times in respect of the scientific implements of war, but even up-to-date fleets and well-equipped armies do not of themselves command success, as recent events have amply proved.

The same lack of initiative, the same state of unpreparedness, the same general chaos were as apparent at the commencement of the Russo-

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Turkish War as they were at the beginning of the Crimean campaign in 1854.

The events which are now taking place in the Far East seem to show that, notwithstanding the experiences of her last war with Turkey, Russia has not laid those lessons to heart, and that she was as little prepared for war against Japan in 1904 as she had been for the invasion of Turkey in 1877.

Nor are any reforms in the military organisation of the Empire possible, so long as the present effete patriarchal form of government continues, a government which employs five underpaid men to do the work of one, and thus opens the door to that corruption which is at the root of all the misfortunes of the country.

This corruption, the curse of Russia, exists in all departments; and all classes of the Emperor's subjects, from the highest to the lowest, are subject to its influence.

The first step towards putting an end to such a state of things is to diminish the number of officials (who can only make two ends meet by fraudulent means), and to increase the salaries of those that remain.

The Russian Government, however, appear to have neither the wish nor the power to carry out such a reform. There are too many persons in high position who would suffer from it; but until such salaries are paid as will enable Government servants to live respectably without dipping their

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fingers into the national purse, so long will all the departments of the State remain in their present condition of inefficiency.

Before going any further, and in order that it should not be thought that I attribute more evil practices to the Russians than they are guilty of, I will here give a few instances of cases of malpractice and inefficiency which came under my personal observation and which, coupled with my general knowledge of Russia and Russian ways, led me to form an opinion, different from that of most people, as to the chances of her being victorious both against the armies of the Sultan in 1877 and those of the Mikado in the present year.

Soon after my appointment to St. Petersburg, the Minister of War, General Milutin, being desirous of having flour ground in the Russian capital for the use of the troops, entered into a contract for that purpose with a very wealthy merchant of the name of Ovsianikoff. It was agreed between the contracting parties that Ovsianikoff should erect a mill in St. Petersburg and have the monopoly of supplying flour, at a certain price, for the garrison; but one of the clauses of the contract provided that the flour must be ground in the mill to be erected, unless by some unavoidable circumstance, or the act of God, Ovsianikoff should be prevented from fulfilling this portion of the arrangement, in which case he was at liberty to procure the flour else-

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where, which he could always do at a price less than it cost him to grind it.

The mill—a huge, red, ugly building which I well remember—was erected close to the Warsaw railway station in St. Petersburg. It had not long been at work before it was burned to the ground, and investigations showed that the fire was the work of an incendiary, for not only had the gas been turned on, causing frequent explosions as the conflagration progressed, but it was also found that several fires had been simultaneously ignited in different parts of the building.

The suspicions of the authorities thus aroused, were intensified by the fact that the chief police officer of the district, shortly after the fire, presented a large cheque for payment at the bank, and further inquiries showed that this cheque was the price paid by Ovsianikoff for the silence of the police officer to whom it was given. Ovsianikoff was tried, and the authorities, fearing that his immense wealth might influence the jury, not an uncommon occurrence in Russia, took care that it should be composed of men of undoubted character. Notwithstanding his age, and he was considerably over seventy, Ovsianikoff was condemned and sent to Siberia, in spite of the many attempts which he had made to bribe the jury.

The most interesting part of this story is, that when Ovsianikoff's papers were seized, it was found that not only were a large number of the

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officials of the commissariat department of the War Office in his pay, but that they received from him higher salaries than they did from the Government.

The famous Russian ironclad *Peter the Great*, of which so much was expected at the time of which I am writing, and which eventually proved a failure, was laid down, if I remember rightly, soon after H.M.S. *Devastation*. It was the Emperor's custom to give audiences to his ministers on different days in the week in order to receive the reports of their respective departments.

One day, some years after the commencement of the building of *Peter the Great*, and after many unfulfilled assurances as to her being shortly ready for sea, the Emperor, who had just returned from his palace in the Crimea, received in audience the acting Minister of Marine, the minister himself being absent on sick-leave at the time.

This officer, being unaccustomed to making personal reports to His Majesty, completely lost his head when asked as to the progress made by the ship in question, and stupidly replied that she would be ready for sea in three weeks. The Emperor expressed great satisfaction at the news, and said that he would shortly inspect the vessel at Cronstadt. It so happened, however, that far from being ready for sea, the ship was still in dock, and that her armour-plates, which were being rolled in England, had not even been delivered.

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The first consignment of plates had, I believe, been despatched, but had been thrown overboard in the Baltic in stress of weather in order to lighten the ship that was conveying them.

In view of the Emperor's threatened visit, all useful work on board the vessel was stopped, and hundreds of men were set to work night and day at the erection of cabins, the covering of the ship with sham armour, the erection of wooden turrets, etc.

On the morning of the Emperor's inspection the captain of the ship even went so far as to suggest to one of the engineers that some straw should be lighted under the funnels, which were already in place, in order to show some smoke.

When the Duke of Edinburgh came to Russia at the time of his marriage with the Emperor's daughter, I told his Royal Highness this story, which, I well remember, he was most reluctant to believe. I told the Duke, however, that he would soon have an opportunity of judging for himself at a naval review which was shortly to take place at Cronstadt, and I predicted that as he was a naval officer, and therefore sure to detect anything wrong, some excuse would be made to prevent his going on board that particular ship.

On the day of the review the fleet was at anchor in two lines, between which the Imperial yacht, with the Emperor and the Duke of Edinburgh on board, slowly steamed.

Following the Emperor's yacht on a private

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vessel belonging to a friend, I was much surprised to see the Duke of Edinburgh put off from the former in a boat and proceed to *Peter the Great*, on board of which his Royal Highness was received.

I subsequently learned that as the Imperial yacht steamed past *Peter the Great*, the Duke of Edinburgh expressed to a Russian naval officer his desire to visit that battleship, but that objections were raised to his doing so. The Emperor, noticing that something was wrong, asked the Duke what it was that he wanted, and on being told, His Majesty, ignorant of course of the actual condition of the vessel, ordered a boat to be lowered immediately to take his Royal Highness on board.

After the review the Duke of Edinburgh told me that I was wrong about the turrets being made of wood, as he had placed his hand on one of them, and it was made of canvas and yielded to the pressure of his fingers.

The officers of the ship, fearing that somebody might go nearer to the turrets than was desirable, had wide coils of beautifully pipe-clayed rope fantastically placed round their bases, but the Duke, remembering my story, approached one of them notwithstanding this ingenious obstruction.

In spite of all the fuss and bluster about this battleship which, we were told, was to be the most formidable vessel afloat, she was so weak when eventually completed, that if driven through

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the water at a greater speed than eight knots, she shook so violently as to leak to an alarming extent, and when her heavy guns were fired her rivet-heads flew about in a most uncomfortable manner.

At the commencement of the war with Turkey a pressing demand was despatched to St. Petersburg from the seat of war for a quantity of mitrailleuses for the use of boats on the Danube.

The order was given for a battery of these guns to be sent off forthwith, but when they were taken out of store it was discovered that all the gun-metal yokes on which the guns traversed had been stolen for the sake of the metal. Still, sooner than admit that this had been the case, the committee of officers charged with the despatch of the battery to the south signed the usual form that it was in every way perfect, and thus sent to their comrades at the front weapons which they knew would be absolutely useless when received.

The following anecdote will perhaps serve better than any other to illustrate the strength of the fetters of corruption by which Russia is trammelled.

A gentleman I knew in St. Petersburg was the owner of extensive works, supplying both the War Office and Admiralty with many of their requirements. One day this gentleman received from a Grand Duke (a brother of the Emperor) an intimation that, having heard of one of his new inventions, he would much like to be permitted to

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see it. Rival works of the same nature had been recently started under Government auspices, which caused a very serious diminution of work given to the firm to which I am referring, and the Grand Duke in question, being at that time the chief of one of the departments from which my friend had been wont to receive many of his orders, the latter was naturally much pleased at thus having an opportunity of speaking to his Imperial Highness with regard to the marked falling off of Government business. He hastened, therefore, to accede to the Grand Duke's request, stating that he would be proud to show his invention at any time.

In a few days his Imperial Highness paid his visit to the works, and my friend did not lose the chance of airing his grievances. The Grand Duke at once said that he was aware that fewer orders were now being given to that particular firm, at the same time admitting that the work they turned out was admirable in every way, and gave as a reason that the prices asked were excessive. To this my friend replied: 'If your Imperial Highness will guarantee to give me the same orders without my having to bribe every one in the department from the doorkeeper upwards, I will on my part guarantee to supply the same work for half the price.'

This remark appeared much to amuse the Grand Duke, who laughingly retorted: 'I myself own property in Siberia the products of which I sell to

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the Government, and if I, a Grand Duke, and a brother of the Emperor, have to bribe in order to obtain Government custom, why should you, who are a foreigner, be exempt from the same tax? I should have thought you had been in Russia too long not to understand the customs of our country.'

Another incident will throw further light on the same subject. During the manœuvres I one day happened to be riding beside an officer who at the time was in temporary charge of the Imperial household during the indisposition of his chief, and as the latter was not considered likely to recover, it was generally supposed that his *locum tenens* would succeed to the office. In course of conversation the officer, who was a colonel, spoke very openly with regard to the robbery going on in the household, a state of things which, when he first took charge of the department, he had hoped to be able to abolish, but he found that it was an Augean stable and his task a hopeless one.

In reply to my question as to why he despaired, he said that it was impossible to get a superior to report his junior in any case of suspected robbery, as, all being tarred with the same brush, he would, if he did so, be himself betrayed by his subordinate.

Knowing that each military attaché when in camp was allowed anything in the way of wine or spirits which he chose to order, and knowing also that my own requirements had always been

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limited to a bottle of claret a day, and a bottle of brandy a week, I asked him, for the sake of curiosity, to inquire what had been ordered by the Imperial footman on my account, and he promised to do so. The next time I met him he told me that five bottles of wine a day, including one of champagne, had been obtained from the Imperial cellars, ostensibly for my consumption, during the whole period of my stay at the camp. This kind of robbery was thought so little of at St. Petersburg, that at a certain fashionable shop any one could purchase wine bearing the label 'Cave Impériale.'

In old days it was an open secret that officers commanding cavalry regiments made a large profit in connection with the supply of forage for their horses, so much so that in the time of the Emperor Nicholas I., and I believe considerably later, if a favourite officer in a Guard regiment got into financial trouble, the Emperor would often say, 'Give him a regiment of cavalry of the line,' which was tantamount to remarking, 'That will pull him through.'

During the time I was in St. Petersburg, General Milutin, Minister of War, being desirous of putting an end to a system which permitted a colonel of a cavalry regiment to make money at the expense of the Government, issued an order by which the purchase of forage was taken out of the personal hands of the colonel, and placed in those of a committee of five regimental

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officers, of which the colonel was, of course, the president.

A short time after the issue of this new regulation I met General Tchernaieff, of Central Asian fame, and a great military reformer. I asked him what he thought of the new order—

'There will now be five robbers instead of one,' was his laconic reply.

I was acquainted with a foreign engineer acting as agent for a company desirous of supplying the Russian Government with small floating lighthouses for harbour purposes. He submitted the plans to the proper authority, and in due course received an intimation that his proposal could not be entertained. Some months afterwards, when dining with a Russian friend, he expressed his disappointment at his failure, mentioning the name of the naval authority to whom the plans had been submitted. 'Oh,' said the friend, 'you applied to the wrong person—he is the man to give the order, but you should have approached him through Mademoiselle ——, and she would have arranged it for you. It is not too late now.' The engineer, acting on his friend's advice, made the acquaintance of the demoiselle, who named her price, and in due course he received an order for the company he represented.

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CHAPTER XII

MORE MALPRACTICES

A FOREIGNER resident in St. Petersburg, with whom I was intimately acquainted, had originally come to Russia for the sole purpose of learning Russian. In order to master the language it was his custom to go anywhere and talk, or rather try to talk, with any one who would be kind enough to be bored with him. With the object he had in view he visited 'tractirs' (drinking-houses) and other low haunts where Russian only was spoken, and where it was more easy to scrape acquaintance with persons to whom he was unknown, than it was in higher spheres of society. In pursuit of his one aim—the knowledge of Russian—he one day, after he had succeeded in learning enough to make himself understood, entered into conversation with a Government employé who had a lodging in the same house as himself, and whom he had continually seen sauntering about the yard with, apparently, no occupation.

This preliminary talk led to daily meetings and conversations. As their acquaintance advanced they became more intimate, and used to dine and sup in each other's rooms. My friend could not

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but wonder how a man without occupation, and whose uniform showed that his salary must be exceedingly meagre, could afford to live a life of idleness and indulge in the comfort which evidently surrounded him.

At last, when their intimacy had reached the point which my friend considered sufficient to justify an attempt at satisfying his curiosity—and after a good *tête-à-tête* dinner at which the employé was his guest, he boldly asked him to explain how he, who was an idle man and whose uniform indicated small pay, could possibly live in the way he did.

The answer was simple and characteristic of Russian ways: 'It is very easy to explain,' he said. 'Before I was invalided, on account of ill-health, I was an usher in the Senate, which, as you know, is the supreme Court of Appeal for all litigants. While there I kept my eyes and ears open, and soon found out that parties to a suit frequently wasted their money in bribing the wrong senators, or the right senators in the wrong way, and thereby lost their cases. I then saw an opening to an honest livelihood and made a study of the whole question, my object being to ascertain which senators were open to bribery, and in what way they should be approached.

'Some—the most honest—would accept the bribe direct; others would scorn a bribe, but at the same time would not object to their wives receiving it; while others, still more punctilious,

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preferred that their mistresses should be the recipients of the *douceurs*.

'I devoted two years to the study of this difficult and complicated question, and when, at the end of that time, I felt qualified to act as an adviser to litigants anxious to win and not disinclined to pay for being put into the way of doing so, I entered into business as an adviser, and after one or two successes my little fortune was made and I retired into private life.'

Perhaps the following story will be considered the most damaging, inasmuch as the occurrence took place during the Russo-Turkish War, a critical time, when Russia had a right to expect the honest devotion of every one of her soldiers.

I had arrived at Bucharest from the front in order to refit for the winter campaign, and was astonished to meet in the yard of my hotel a foreign merchant who had been a friend of mine at St. Petersburg. It seemed so strange to see a civilian and a foreigner at such a place and at such a time, that I could not refrain from asking him the reason of his coming.

He replied that things were slack in St. Petersburg, and that he had come down in search of business. We dined together, and after dinner he joined me in my room to smoke and discuss the events of the day. As he entered, I noticed that he was carrying a large bag, evidently full of money, and so heavy that he had difficulty in

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placing it on the table. I asked him whether he had been able to transact any business, for a visit to a campaigning army was not, one would have thought, likely to lead to anything of the sort.

Having rung for the waiter, he gave orders that when Colonel Z. called, he was to be shown into his room, which adjoined mine.

The colonel was soon announced, and my friend, taking up his bag of coin, left me, saying he would be back directly.

On his return he voluntarily explained to me the business he was engaged in, the nature of which I had, I must confess, already guessed when I heard of an expected military visitor and saw the bag of gold.

It appears that having heard that the Russians required transport for the conveyance of heavy siege-guns, etc., to the front, my friend went to Colonel Z., with whom he was well acquainted, and who, if he could not give a contract for such transport himself, was in a position to influence those who could, and requested him to obtain it for him. He was asked what commission he was prepared to pay, and the sum having been agreed upon, was told that the matter would be considered. A few days later the colonel called upon my friend and handed him a contract, the signing of which would secure him the business he had asked for.

After reading it, the merchant observed that it was absolutely impossible for him to sign it,

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that nobody in the world could supply the required transport in the time named, and that the fine imposed by one of its clauses in the event of failure to carry out the contract within the specified period was so enormous that, not only must he decline to sign it himself, but he was sure that no one else would be found to do so.

To this the colonel replied: 'You forget that you are not the only person who desires this contract. The clauses you complain of were inserted simply in order to frighten others, so that the business should be given to you. If you sign, it becomes a matter of honour between you and me. You pay me the money agreed on and the contract is yours, and the clauses you object to will of course never be enforced.'

On this they shook hands, and the bag which my friend carried from my room contained the amount agreed upon as the commission for which the contract should be given.

The following story was related to me by the late Eugene Schuyler, when he was First Secretary of the American Legation in St. Petersburg.

With a view to collecting materials for his book —*Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan*, etc., which became a standard work on Central Asia— he accompanied that famous American war correspondent, MacGahan, when the latter started to join the Russian army, which was then marching on Khiva. This was in the year 1873.

On arrival at Orenburg the two travellers were

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refused permission to follow the troops, which had already started. MacGahan made his escape and followed in pursuit, and, if I remember rightly, was just in time to be present at the fall of Khiva —a hazardous journey which, however, enabled him to write his interesting work, *Campaigning on the Oxus*, etc.

Schuyler, being in an official position, was unable to disregard the Russian refusal to permit him to accompany the expedition: he therefore made up his mind to remain at Orenburg for a time, and there collect as much information as possible for his book.

The Governor of Orenburg received him most hospitably, as did many other persons in high official position in the town.

Among the guests whom he frequently met at the house of the Governor, as well as at those of his other acquaintances, was a man of most agreeable manners and high education, and with whom he soon became on most friendly terms.

One day, when dining alone with him at his house, where the general surroundings showed that his host was a wealthy man, Schuyler ventured to say that he could not understand why a man of his evident means and cultivated tastes should choose so miserable a town as Orenburg as a place of residence, to which his friend replied: 'I know you well now, and I know I can trust you, so if you will listen I will tell you a story which will explain to you the reason of my living here.

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'Some years ago I was residing in St. Petersburg, and one night when at a ball at a friend's house, a servant told me that two gentlemen desired to speak with me downstairs on urgent business. When I reached the hall two men in civilian clothes approached me, and before I knew where I was, I found myself hustled into a shut carriage, the blinds of which were drawn down, and which immediately drove off at a rapid pace with me and my two unknown companions.

'In vain did I ask them the cause of their strange behaviour, and whither they were taking me. I could obtain no reply. After driving for about an hour and a half the carriage stopped, the opening of heavy doors was heard, and we entered what was evidently a yard, at the end of which other doors were opened, and we entered a second yard.

'I was then taken up to an apartment furnished like a barrack-room, where I passed the night. On the following morning I was visited by an official in uniform, who asked me if my name was so-and-so, to which I of course replied in the affirmative. He then told me that it was known that I had been conspiring with others against the throne, and demanded that I should divulge the names of my accomplices. Having none, I could of course reply in no other way than to that effect.

'It is needless to say that I was not believed, and after making every sort of ineffectual attempt to make me admit my guilt, my examiner retired.

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'For several days I had visits of a similar nature from different officials, but as I had never conspired with any one, I could but repeat what I had said at my first examination. They then tried another plan, and kept me on bread and water for some weeks, at the expiration of which I was visited by a man purporting to be a doctor, who tried to convince me that I was going out of my mind, which I really think I should have done had I been kept much longer in that fearful state of nerves brought on by my long imprisonment and my utter ignorance as to where I was, or what my fate might be.

'Finding that the low diet on which I had been placed, and my consequent weakness, did not in any way affect the answers I made at subsequent examinations, my inquisitors, as a last resource, tried another plan. One morning I was led by my gaolers along several corridors into a large hall draped with black cloth. In the centre of this hall, seated at a small table, was Count Schouvaloff, then head of the gendarmerie or secret police, generally known as La Troisième Section.

'I was led up to the table, and the Count asked me if I admitted that my name was so-and-so. On my assenting, he demanded the names of my accomplices.

'As I could but give the same answer as I had given before, namely, that as I had never conspired, I could have no co-conspirators, Count

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Schouvaloff merely uttered the word "Siberia," pointing to the door as he did so.

'I subsequently discovered that, although I had been driven about for so long a time on the evening of my arrest, my destination was the offices of the secret police, within a few hundred yards of the house from which I had been taken.

'In due course I was, indeed, conveyed to Siberia, not to the mines, but to one of the penal colonies where, although a prisoner, I had more or less liberty, and could roam about within the district of my confinement.

'The governor of the colony, recognising, I suppose, after a time that I was a harmless individual, gave me more latitude than was allowed to most of the prisoners so, as my fate was to be an exile, I could but be grateful for the treatment I received.

'At the end of two years and a half the governor sent for me, and said that he had just received a despatch from St. Petersburg, saying that a man bearing the same name as myself had been discovered, and that it was he whom they originally desired to arrest, and that I was in consequence to be set at liberty.

'On my return from Siberia I passed through Orenburg, and the governor of that town being a personal friend of mine, I elected to remain there for a time, and subsequently, feeling that if I returned either to St. Petersburg or Moscow I

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might, under our present régime, be again subjected to similar treatment, I made up my mind to remain where I was sooner than risk a repetition of my miserable experiences.

'Thus it is, my dear friend, that I, who am, as you say, a wealthy man and one of education, am to be found living in this out of the way corner of the world. Here I run no risks. I am known to the governor and to all the officials, who would never dream of suspecting me of being anything but a still loyal subject of the Emperor, notwithstanding the infamous treatment I have received at the hands of his officials.'

I have related the above in practically the same words as those used by Mr. Schuyler, a man of undoubted honour, and who told me that he believed the story to be absolutely true.

The Count Schouvaloff mentioned in the above narrative is the same who but a few years ago occupied the post of Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James's.

Another incident of a similar nature which I will now relate tends to show that the experiences of Mr. Schuyler's Orenburg friend are not so improbable as they might appear to those having only a superficial knowledge of Russia and her system of administration.

Among several masters I at various times employed to teach me the Russian language, was a gentleman belonging to one of the learned professions.

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I knew him well, and have no reason to doubt the truth of what he confided to me.

One morning he arrived somewhat late to give his lesson. He appeared very agitated, and was ghastly pale. He refused the usual cigarette, and appeared altogether to be in a very nervous state. I begged him not to mind about the lesson, as he looked so ill, but he insisted on giving it.

We had not proceeded far with our work, when he himself suggested stopping, and gave me the following explanation as to the excited state in which he was.

There had recently been much insubordination amongst the students of the different colleges in the capital, which had given serious anxiety to the Government, and it appeared, according to what my master told me, that in the middle of the previous night General Trépoff, the head of the metropolitan police, had sent his agents to make a descent on one of the colleges, a number of students in which, taken indiscriminately, were hurried into carriages and conveyed to General Trépoff's offices. There the general, after having upbraided them in no measured terms, informed them that he was about to hand them over to the tender mercies of the secret police.

It so happened that my informant's nephew, a boy of eighteen, was among those who had thus been arrested. The lad was clever with his pencil and able to support his mother and sister, his

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father being dead, by devoting his spare time to the illustration of medical works, at which he was an adept.

In these circumstances, said his uncle, he had neither the wish nor the time to join in any of the boyish disloyalty of his comrades.

General Trépoff carried out his threat. The boys were again placed in carriages and conveyed to the offices of the secret police, where they were all huddled together in one room, from which they were, one by one, called into an adjoining apartment.

When the turn of my friend's nephew came, he found on entering the next room Count Schouvaloff, who, as I said before, was then chief of the secret police, sitting at a table close to which was an unoccupied chair, on which the Count invited him to sit. No sooner had he done so than a trapdoor, on which the boy's chair was placed, was gradually lowered until only the upper part of his body remained above the floor, and in this position he received a severe flogging, after which he was sent about his business, being told by Count Schouvaloff that he had received a lesson which would teach him not to meddle in politics again.

'That,' said my tutor, 'is the cause of all my agitation, the thought that it is possible that my nephew, a hard-working, industrious, and well-behaved lad should, without any inquiry, have been subjected to such an indignity.' I cannot,

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of course, vouch for the accuracy of this tale, but while in Russia I heard of so many cases of a similar nature, that I cannot but think the story was a true one.

Before leaving the subject of Russian malpractices, I must give a final narrative showing what barbarities are possible in that country.

Although the use of the knout and the thrashing of soldiers by officers and non-commissioned officers, which used formerly to be matters of daily occurrence, had in theory been abolished in the Russian army, this form of punishment as a matter of fact still existed, even in the Guards, to within a very short period of the time to which I am now referring, namely the year 1881.

I had given up my official position in Russia, and was travelling on my own account in that country, when I one day met a former St. Petersburg colleague and a Russian civilian with whom I was also personally well acquainted. We all three dined together, and after dinner, in the course of conversation, my companions alluded to something that had lately taken place in one of the cavalry regiments of the Guard, evidently thinking that I myself was acquainted with the matter of which they were speaking. As, however, I had never heard anything about it, I asked for details, and was told the following story :—

In one of the squadrons of a cavalry regiment of the Guard, quartered some miles from St. Petersburg, was a non-commissioned officer who

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bullied his men to such an extent that they resolved to stand it no longer, and to take the law into their own hands on the first favourable occasion.

It was not long before his conduct gave them the opportunity they desired and, seizing the bully, they proceeded to give him a sound thrashing with wet knotted towels. Their plan succeeded admirably, and their victim at once altered his behaviour towards them. In another squadron of the same regiment there also happened to be a non-commissioned officer who treated his men with equal brutality, and they, having observed the successful result of the proceedings of their comrades of the other squadron, determined to have recourse to the same drastic measures. They, however, went too far, and flogged their man until he died. In order to hide their crime, they carried the body into a neighbouring wood and there buried it.

A few weeks later two labourers who were crossing the wood observed that their dog was scratching at something in the ground, and on approaching the spot they saw a booted leg protruding from the earth where the dog was. The corpse of the non-commissioned officer was thus discovered, and information was given to the police, which led to the trial by court-martial of a private in the squadron.

The trial took place at the permanent military court in St. Petersburg, and the late Grand Duke

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Nicholas, who then commanded the military district of St. Petersburg, was present.

The prosecuting officer at the end of his speech stated that the case was a simple one, as the man had made a full confession of his guilt.

At this point the prisoner interrupted, but the president of the court ordered him to be silent.

Here the Grand Duke interposed on behalf of the prisoner, saying, 'Let us hear what the man has to say.'

'Yes,' cried the prisoner, 'it is true I did confess, but why did I do so? Because an officer of my squadron, accompanied by gendarmes, entered my barrack-room and accused me of taking part in the murder, which I denied. I was then strapped down to a seat, my boots were removed, and a fire was kindled under my feet. Then, and not till then, did I confess, and if you don't believe me, take off my boots now and see for yourselves.'

This trial created a great sensation at the time, and it is only right to say that the colonel was deprived of his command, and the officers of the squadron to which the prisoner belonged were, as a punishment, drafted into regiments of the line.

There is an anecdote connected with the Emperor Nicholas I. which seems to bear on this subject of malpractices. When asked how much the construction of the famous St. Isaac's Cathedral at St. Petersburg had cost the Empire, His Majesty replied: 'How can you ask me such

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an idiotic question, considering that nobody but God Almighty or the architect could possibly answer it?'

A very short time ago I met in London an old St. Petersburg acquaintance who now holds a high diplomatic position abroad. While discussing events and persons connected with the war of 1877, at which my friend was also present, I mentioned the name of a certain Russian individual, upon which he exclaimed, 'Ah! *he* was an honest man.' These few words appear to me to so thoroughly express the state of things in Russia at that time, namely that the honest man was the exception, that I cannot refrain from recording them here.

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CHAPTER XIII

INEFFICIENCY

I WILL now relate a few examples of what may be termed inefficiency rather than malpractice. Perhaps the most important of these is one which occurred during the Russo-Turkish War.

Those who are old enough to have been interested in the events of that great conflict will probably remember the famous telegram sent by the Minister of War in September 1877 to St. Petersburg from the Imperial headquarters, in which he said, 'Plevna is now completely invested, and its fall is but a matter of time,' or words to that effect.

Some weeks after the publication of this telegram, which caused a sensation of relief throughout Russia, I was sitting in my underground hut at the Imperial headquarters outside Plevna discussing the events of the day with one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp. This officer was of high rank, and enjoyed the confidence of his sovereign in an especial degree.

He had not been with me long before he received a message to the effect that the Emperor desired to see him at once, and he, of course,

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immediately proceeded to the cottage in which His Majesty resided.

Some weeks elapsed before I met this officer again. He then told me that when he saw the Emperor on the evening above referred to, His Majesty said that he had been assured that Plevna had been for some time completely invested, and ordered him to go round the positions and report whether or not this was really the case.

Accordingly, on the following morning, my informant rode in the direction of the Sofia road, above which he found a general officer commanding a division of infantry, who at his request gave him an orderly officer to conduct him to a position from which a view of the road leading from Plevna to the Balkans could be obtained.

After riding a short distance with his guide, they both dismounted, and the Emperor's aide-de-camp, proceeding alone, chose a spot which appeared favourable for observation, and there remained to watch.

He had not long to wait before he ascertained that Plevna was in no sense of the term 'completely invested,' for within half an hour he saw a Turkish convoy, escorted by infantry, slowly approaching from the direction of the Balkans and wending its way into Plevna; and so little did the Turks anticipate attack that the men of the escort were marching in a leisurely manner, enjoying their cigarettes. This convoy was shortly followed by another. 'Is it conceivable,' said my

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friend, 'that such a state of things could exist, seeing the mass of cavalry at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief within so short a distance of the spot where the convoys passed?'

The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh spent most of the summer of the year 1874 in Russia, as guests of the Emperor. At the conclusion of their visit, the Duchess, desiring to return to England by sea, obtained from her father the use of one of the Imperial yachts for that purpose. When I heard this I expressed to one of the officers attending their Royal Highnesses my regret that this decision had been come to, for I did not consider an Imperial yacht a very safe conveyance, particularly in the state of health the Duchess was then in. I had myself had experience of such a vessel, having sailed from Cronstadt to Flushing in the Imperial yacht *Derjava*, and my experience had not been a pleasant one, nor had it caused me to form a very high opinion of the Russian naval officer.

On the night that we left Cronstadt, I was talking to the captain after dinner, and happened to ask him at what time he generally retired to rest. Drawing himself up, he very haughtily replied, 'Sir, I never go to bed when in active command of one of His Majesty's ships.' This remark was not calculated to inspire me with much confidence in the remainder of the ship's officers.

On the evening of the departure of their Royal Highnesses from Cronstadt, I received a note from

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one of the English staff, written just as they were starting, bidding me good-bye, and telling me that notwithstanding all I had said, they had never seen anything so perfect or comfortable as the yacht, and that they were looking forward to a most enjoyable voyage. They were escorted by a smaller yacht, the *Olaf*, and both vessels were bound for Dover. After the arrival of the royal party in England, I received a letter from the same gentleman who had written to me from Cronstadt, saying that they had had a very bad passage, and that their experiences had been anything but pleasant. It appears that there were several admirals on the yacht besides the captain, which is usual in Russia when an important member of the Imperial family is on board. Heavy weather set in as they got into the Gulf of Finland, causing the ship to roll heavily. As the storm increased, so did the bad behaviour of the vessel, and before long the heavy furniture in the cabins, becoming detached from the walls, began to shift, and ended by being tossed to and fro in a most alarming manner. None of the ship's company appeared capable of putting things in order, and recourse was at last had to the soldier and sailor servants of the English officers of the suite, who eventually succeeded in making everything fast again. My informant went on to say that he was suddenly awakened early one morning by the reversal of the engines, and, hurrying on deck, found Admiral Popoff on the bridge, who

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told him that he had come up quite by chance, and noticing breakers ahead, had given orders to reverse the engines only just in time. These breakers marked the site of the Winterton Sands, off the coast of Norfolk, of which my correspondent gave me a rough chart in his letter, showing the position of the ship when it was stopped. They eventually arrived at Gravesend instead of Dover, and the poor *Olaf* was not heard of until a week later when she arrived at Hull!

After these examples of malpractices and inefficiency, which are matters of everyday occurrence in Russia, it will, I think, be admitted that I had good reason for not sharing the general anticipation of success for the Russian arms both in the war against Turkey, and in that now proceeding in the Far East. It is true that from the former campaign Russia eventually came out victorious, but her success was to be attributed more to the faults of her enemy than, with the exception of personal bravery, to any merits of her own.

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CHAPTER XIV

NICOLAIEFF

DURING the summer of 1878 I received instructions to attend the launch of the first Russian circular ironclad, the *Novgorod*, at Nicolaieff, the great Black Sea shipbuilding centre on the river Boug. Vessels of this class were commonly called 'Popoffka,' after Admiral Popoff, who was supposed to have originated the idea of circular vessels. I say 'supposed,' because I remember being shown at the time a small pamphlet, written many years before, by a partner of one of our largest shipbuilding firms, suggesting that a round ship might be built on the principle of a watchglass floating on the water with its concave side uppermost, and enumerating the advantages that such a vessel might possess for certain purposes, the author saying in conclusion that he was himself too old a man to make the experiment. No one, however, will grudge Admiral Popoff any credit which may be claimed for ships of this novel design, on the construction of which the Russian Government expended vast sums.

Knowing that the Grand Duke Constantine, Lord High Admiral of the Russian Navy, intended to be present himself at the launch, I took an oppor-

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tunity of asking his Imperial Highness whether I might be allowed to attend the ceremony. He replied that, as far as he was concerned, there was nothing he would like better, but that he could not invite me without the Emperor's permission, which, however, he soon obtained. A few days later I started for St. Petersburg with the Grand Duke and his staff, and after a couple of days at Moscow we travelled south in a most luxurious Imperial train—indeed so comfortably did we travel that, when dinner was served in the dining-room car, the train was always stopped when soup was handed round, so that it might be partaken of without the inconvenience caused by the jolting of the carriages.

A short time after our arrival at Nicolaieff the launch of the *Novgorod* took place—a great function attended by the Grand Duke, his staff, the local officials, and all the rank and fashion of Nicolaieff society. The Grand Duke witnessed the ceremony from a stand specially erected for him and his friends. Needless to say that Admiral Popoff was the hero of the hour. The great vessel was launched head foremost from ways specially constructed so as not to injure any of her six screws, of which there were three on each side of the rudder. The successful launch of the ship was the signal for every one to kiss every one else, an operation which lasted a considerable time, and in which Admiral Popoff was, of course, the most favoured. Thanks, I suppose, to my less

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demonstrative nationality, I was spared participation in these promiscuous embraces.

On the following day another visit was paid to the ship as she lay in the river, and on this occasion, by working half the engines ahead and the other half astern, she was made to spin round like a teetotum on her own axis, which she did in one minute and nineteen seconds, after which, by the same process, she was made to twirl round in the opposite direction. These revolutions, although most uncomfortable to all on board, caused Admiral Popoff to be again embraced by his many admirers, male and female.

The Admiral was at that time a middle-aged, thick-set man, of florid complexion, and endowed with indomitable energy. He was considered the great shining light of the Russian Navy. While professing the greatest admiration and affection for the British, I verily believe that his one ambition was to command a victorious Russian fleet sailing up the Thames, and I do not think that such an eventuality appeared to him in the slightest degree impossible.

I shall never forget the ill-disguised look of satisfaction with which he one morning, September 2, 1875, entered the Duke of Edinburgh's sitting-room at the Kremlin in Moscow, to announce to us the news he had just received of the loss of H.M.S. *Vanguard*. Admiral Popoff, who spoke English very indifferently, had the peculiarity when talking that language

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of commencing every sentence with 'Um-um,' and it was thus that he told us his bad news: 'Um-um, dee *Vanguard* gone to dee bottom. Am sorry. Bad job.' At the same time his eyes were beaming with delight.

The Admiral paid a visit to England every year, and on these occasions was invariably accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Goulaieff. Now this young officer had been educated at one of the English schools of naval architecture, a circumstance which may perhaps explain the fact of the Russian Admiralty being in possession of the working drawings of Her Majesty's torpedo vessels *Vesuvius* and *Oberon*, which I was once shown, with much pride, by an officer of the Russian Imperial Navy!

The most prominent member of the Grand Duke Constantine's staff during this journey to the Black Sea was Admiral Greig, who eventually became Controller of the Empire.

The fact of a man bearing such a well-known Scotch name having risen to so high a position in a foreign country is curious enough to justify my relating the circumstances which led to it. Many years ago, and at a time when advancement in the British Royal Navy depended more on social influence than on individual merit, there were two young English midshipmen named Greig and Hamilton. As neither of these boys had much family influence, and their prospects of promotion in consequence seemed more than doubtful, they

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determined to pursue their careers in another country, and, quitting the Royal Navy, proceeded to St. Petersburg, where they offered their services to the Russian Government. Their offer was accepted, the command of a gunboat was given to each, and they both eventually became admirals in the Russian service. This was during the reign of the Emperor Nicholas I. Admiral Greig married a Russian, and Admiral Hamilton an English lady, the daughter of a member of the British colony. So grateful were these two admirals for the manner in which they had been received, as well as for their rapid promotion, that they both determined that their sons should also join the Russian service. Notwithstanding that young Hamilton had been brought up in England, and was very anxious to obtain a commission in the British Army, he was compelled, much against his inclination, to join the Empress's Cuirassiers of the Guard, and Greig's father obtained for his son an appointment under the Russian Government. Although at the time of which I am writing the latter held the title of admiral, I do not think that he was long, if at all, in the Russian Navy, but rather that he was permitted to adopt that title as a recognition of his father's services. This, then, was the Admiral Greig who was one of my companions during the journey I am describing. He was a man of much shrewdness and great caution, spoke English like an Englishman, and was, above all, proud of his Scotch descent.

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CHAPTER XV

THE CRIMEA

WHEN the Grand Duke had completed his official duties of inspection at Nicolaieff he determined to visit Orianda, his lovely palace on the southern coast of the Crimea, and was kind enough to invite me to accompany him—an invitation which I was not slow to accept.

We started on a lovely June evening on one of the Imperial yachts, and as we left Nicolaieff the Grand Duke pointed out to me another Imperial yacht, a paddle steamer, which he took much pleasure in telling me had been captured from the English during the Crimean war, and which was in fact the old *Tiger* despatch-boat, which ran ashore at Odessa during that campaign, and was there captured by the Russians. I remember seeing her ensign hung up as a trophy among many other captured flags of different nationalities in the Kazan Church in St. Petersburg. The following morning, at a very early hour, I was suddenly awakened by the stopping of the engines, followed by a visit from one of the Grand Duke's aides-de-camp, who told me his Imperial Highness was on deck, and that he had stopped the

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vessel because we were approaching Sevastopol, and he wished to point out to me the different forts and other objects of interest which could be seen from the sea. Hastily dressing, I hurried on deck, and it was most interesting to me to have pointed out the different forts and buildings whose names had become so familiar in connection with the history of the Crimean War, especially by one who had himself taken part in the heroic defence of the fortress we were approaching.

We then steamed slowly on between the forts, and having passed them would, in the ordinary way, have turned sharp to the right into the quarantine harbour, the place of disembarkation, but the Grand Duke, desirous of showing me as much as possible, very kindly gave orders for the yacht to proceed to the extremity of the principal port, so that a distant view of the Tchernaia might be obtained. So narrow does the harbour here become that it took a very long time to turn the vessel, but when this was done we steamed into the quarantine harbour and there landed. From all appearances I should say that the Sevastopol of that day was very little altered from the Sevastopol of the Crimean War. Many houses, it is true, had been rebuilt, and here and there one would come across a new Government office, but on the whole the town presented an aspect of destruction as gloomy as it was real.

The Grand Duke, having business which kept him some days in this fortress, was kind enough

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to arrange excursions for me to the English Cemetery, the Redan, the Malakoff, etc., places which have been so often described by other travellers that it is needless for me to say more about them here.

On the south side of the harbour, and on high commanding ground, stands a fine pyramid of black granite or marble, the base of which is surrounded by an esplanade overlooking the port. This pyramid, erected in commemoration of the Russian soldiers and sailors who fell in defence of the fortress against the allies, is indeed a monument worthy of its purpose. The Russians are extremely proud of it, as well they may be, and the Grand Duke, who insisted on taking me to it himself, evinced evident pleasure in pointing out its beauties, and especially those of the exquisite little chapel which forms the interior of the building.

On the esplanade I noticed a row of guns belonging to different nations, several of which were British, and I was told by the Grand Duke that they had been captured by the Russians during the war. Being unable to call to mind any engagement in which we had lost guns during that campaign, I asked the Grand Duke where and when these guns were taken. He could not tell me, and was at last obliged to admit that he himself had no recollection of our losing any guns to the Russians, but that the fact of their being there was a proof that they had been captured,

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and he promised to make inquiries on the subject on his return to St. Petersburg. I subsequently remembered that we had lent some guns to the Turks with which to defend certain forts in the neighbourhood of Balaclava, and I imagine that when these forts were taken, as they were by the Russians, the guns which they contained were also captured. When I made this suggestion to the Grand Duke he agreed with my solution of the difficulty. If so, I suppose they were the very guns which Captain Nolan, by order of Lord Lucan, desired Lord Cardigan to capture, an order which led to the disastrous charge of Balaclava.

The Grand Duke Constantine having completed his business at Sevastopol, we started one morning at daybreak and, driving along the western coast of the Crimea, arrived before midday at Balaclava. Here I saw the very landing-stages, still in use, which had been built by the British during the siege. The Grand Duke took me out to sea for about a mile in a steam launch which had been sent round from Sevastopol to meet us, and then, turning the boat homewards, asked me to point out the position of the harbour we had just left. Although the weather was fine, and free from haze, I was unable to do so, as the harbour, being in the shape of the letter S, the entrance to it was invisible, even at so short a distance, and that, as the Grand Duke explained to me, was one of the great difficulties our ships

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had to contend with in bad weather at the time of the war.

After visiting the field of Balaclava, where the leading features of the battle were explained to me, we re-entered our carriages and made for the south coast. Most of the time we followed the western shore, but for an hour or two before reaching Baida, the south-western point of the peninsula, we left the sea, and did not approach it again until that place was reached. We had passed under a rustic gateway, called 'The Baida Gate,' before I realised that we were again close to the coast.

I can imagine nothing more beautiful than to look down on the Black Sea from the cliffs just beyond this gate. On that day the water was absolutely calm, and of a lustrous sapphire blue. The road here turns to the left, and runs along the summit of the cliff some hundreds of feet above the sea, on the shores of which lie the beautiful palaces Alupka, Orianda, and Livadia, until it eventually reaches a height above the little harbour of Yalta.

On arrival at a spot from which the Grand Duke could see his superb palace Orianda with its graceful colonnades at the foot of the cliff, he alighted from his carriage, and for a considerable time stood silently admiring the place to which he was so devotedly attached. We then, turning off the road, drove down to the palace beneath. I was given a beautiful apartment, but notwithstanding the general magnificence and luxury which

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surrounded us, when I asked for a bath, the servant responded by bringing me a white china teapot full of hot water, and one solitary towel. Although the Russians, as a nation, are perhaps the cleanest in the world inasmuch as most of the peasants have a weekly steam bath, oddly enough the higher classes are an exception to the rule, and I remember a minister, whose name I will not divulge, announcing at a dinner-party that he had at last discovered the secret of washing, which was to be wiped down with a tepid moist sponge by his servant once a fortnight.

One of the chief characteristics of Russia is the extraordinary mixture of magnificence and barbarism. I was once present in Moscow at a gala performance at the opera-house at the time of the Duke of Edinburgh's marriage. The centre of the first tier opposite the stage had, as usual, been converted into one enormous box for the Imperial and Royal families and their attendants. At the back of the box was a large drawing-room, in which I happened to be when the Imperial servants in gorgeous liveries commenced to prepare the tea-table. It was amusing enough to see the casual manner in which the large pieces of plate which they brought with them had been packed, but I could scarcely believe my eyes when they produced from their coat-tail pockets large parcels of gold knives, forks, and spoons wrapped up in dirty pieces of newspaper; and this was going on in a

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room which might at any moment have been entered by the Emperor himself.

I have several times seen the servants during an Imperial banquet at the Kremlin in Moscow and elsewhere drinking from glasses at the side-board, and it is their invariable practice on such occasions to clear the table of bon-bons, which they thrust into their pockets the very moment the guests have left the room. This is permitted, and the practice has existed from time immemorial, but, in their eagerness to fill their pockets, they do not always wait until the door is closed on the diners before commencing their raid.

I remained for some days at Orianda, and then returned to St. Petersburg after a delightful and instructive journey, during which I learned many interesting facts relating to the Crimean War from Admiral Greig, who had taken part in it as aide-de-camp to Prince Mentschikoff, and which I will here relate.

It will be remembered that when war broke out between the allies and Russia, the supreme command of the Russian armies was in the hands of Prince Gortchakoff, who personally commanded that portion of the troops which operated on the Danube, while the army in the Crimea was commanded by Prince Mentschikoff.

When the latter learned that our ships had been taking soundings off Eupatoria, on the west coast of the Crimea, he felt sure that an invasion of the peninsula was intended, and that the landing

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would take place in the vicinity of that place. He therefore at once proceeded to prepare for our advance towards the heights of the Alma. One evening, after a long day had been spent in marking out the distances from the heights to the river, vineyards, etc., and just as Prince Mentschikoff and his staff were preparing to return to Sevastopol, a cart drove up, from which a young officer alighted. He was the bearer of a despatch to the Prince from his chief, Prince Gortchakoff. This he handed to Greig, who happened to be aide-de-camp in waiting, and who, in his turn, presented it to the Prince. The despatch contained instructions, and at the end was a postscript saying, 'The bearer is a clever young officer of engineers. If he can be of any use to you, keep him; if not, send him back to me.' When he had finished reading, Prince Mentschikoff desired Greig to tell the bearer to go to Sevastopol and report himself to him at headquarters the following morning. When he did so the Prince said to him, 'I am informed by Prince Gortchakoff that you are a clever engineer officer. I wish you to go round and inspect the works here and make me a report on them.' This young officer turned out to be no other than Todleben, the hero of Sevastopol, and the man to whom more than twenty years later the fall of Plevna was due.

Admiral Greig also gave me a most interesting account of the manner in which the Emperor Nicholas I. received the news of the defeat of his

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army by the allies at the battle of the Alma. It has often been written and said that the Emperor was so incensed at the communication that he spat upon and buffeted the officer who brought it. As, however, that messenger was Greig himself, my readers will probably be interested to learn his account of what actually took place. It appears that when Prince Mentschikoff recognised that the battle was lost, he turned to Greig and said, 'Gallop at once into Sevastopol; there get a post-cart and drive to Moscow, where you will take the train to St. Petersburg. On arrival, go immediately to the Emperor, and tell His Majesty from me that I have been defeated by the allies, who will, of course, attack the north side of the fortress into which I am now going to retreat. Tell him that I intend to march out of Sevastopol with the main body of my army to the eastward, leaving only a sufficient number of troops in the place to make a show in the north forts, and that, as the allies advance to the attack, I shall fall upon their left flank with the whole of my army and drive them into the sea.'

In obedience to these instructions Greig rode into Sevastopol, and having obtained a conveyance forthwith started on his mission, and, if I remember rightly, he told me that it took him three weeks, driving night and day, changing horses about every fifteen miles, to reach Moscow. He arrived in the ancient capital completely exhausted, which is not to be wondered at, considering his terribly

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long drive in a springless cart, and he naturally enough looked forward to a peaceful sleep in the train to St. Petersburg.

The line from St. Petersburg to Moscow was the first railway built in Russia, and at the time in question telegraphic communication was not yet in use. The only rapid means of conveying intelligence was by semaphore. As soon therefore as he arrived at Moscow, Greig semaphored to St. Petersburg to say that an aide-de-camp was starting by train with news from the seat of war, but unfortunately he forgot to mention that aide-de-camp's name. He then got into his railway carriage with the agreeable prospect before him of having a good night's rest for the first time since he left Sevastopol. Much to his disgust, however, at every single station he was aroused and asked what his name was. Evidently the Emperor had told some one to inquire the name of the bearer of the despatches, and that the official, to make quite sure of obtaining the information, had semaphored the same question to every stationmaster along the line. On arrival at St. Petersburg, Greig learned that the court was in one of the country palaces, if I remember rightly, at Ropsha, in the neighbourhood of the capital. Thither Greig immediately repaired, and having reported himself to the aide-de-camp in waiting, was shortly informed at what time His Majesty would see him. At the appointed hour he was ushered into a large hall where the Emperor

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stood surrounded by his suite, all in full uniform. As Greig entered, the Emperor came towards him with the evident intention of embracing him, according to Russian custom, as the bearer of good news, but Greig raised his hand as an intimation that his news was bad. When he had delivered the message that he had received on the field of battle from Prince Mentschikoff, the Emperor, drawing himself up, said in severe tones, 'I imagine that this is the first time in the annals of military history that the commander of an army in the field has dared to make such a communication to his sovereign otherwise than in writing.'

I must here record an anecdote concerning the Crimean war, related to me by my father, who was ambassador in Paris during the whole period of that campaign. He had just returned to the embassy from an interview with the Emperor at the Tuileries, when Baron Rothschild called to see him and showed him a telegram which his firm had just received from Brussels, stating that Prince Mentschikoff had sent a message to his Emperor to the effect that, as he believed it to be His Majesty's intention to send two of the young Grand Dukes to the Crimea, he hoped that he would do so before November 5th, so as to enable them to be present on that day at a great attack on the allies, by which the latter would be driven into the sea. Baron Rothschild said that he could not answer for the accuracy of the contents of the telegram, and merely showed it for what it was

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worth. My father immediately returned to the Tuileries, and informed the Emperor of what he had heard. His Majesty said that he would telegraph the news to his commander-in-chief in the Crimea, and advised my father to do the same to Lord Raglan, which however had already been done.

Subsequent events showed that the news contained in the telegram was absolutely true, for on the 5th November the great attack on Inkerman was made, but with a different result from that anticipated by Prince Mentschikoff. The Grand Dukes Michael and Nicholas arrived at Sevastopol on the eve of the battle, which they witnessed from the summit of a hill, personally attended by Prince Mentschikoff, and I remember hearing Colonel 'Jim' Macdonald tell my father at the embassy in Paris, on his return from the war, that he had seen the two Grand Dukes galloping over the Tchernaia bridge after the repulse of the Russian attack. My father subsequently learned that his telegram had reached the British headquarters, but apparently no notice was taken of it, as the attack on the heights of Inkerman came as a surprise to the allies, and no special preparations had been made to repulse it.

A Russian officer, General Komaroff, told me that he accompanied a column of 48,000 men who marched in the winter from Warsaw to Sevastopol in order to reinforce the garrison, and that of this body of troops only 12,000 reached

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their destination. This shows what fearful sacrifices Russia was called upon to make for the defence of the great Black Sea fortress.

In the same way has Russia conveyed hundreds of thousands of men to meet the armies of Japan in Manchuria, but at what expense of life and torture, to man and beast, we shall never know.

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CHAPTER XVI

ANALOGY

THE analogy between the events which preceded the commencement of the Russo-Turkish War, and those preceding the present conflict with Japan, is very remarkable.

In both cases public opinion in Europe was for a long time swaying to and fro between the probability and improbability of a declaration of war.

There can be no doubt that in both cases the rulers of Russia were, from the very commencement, averse from war, but in both cases the bluster of their diplomacy precipitated events to such a degree that they lost all that power of control which, had they exercised it sooner, might have led to a peaceful result.

It is, I imagine, impossible to conceive a man of a more peaceful nature than was Alexander II., the liberator of the serfs, but unfortunately he permitted too much licence on the part of his statesmen, and matters went from bad to worse until, although an autocrat, he was unable to stem the intense national feeling which had been

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created by the grossly exaggerated reports of Turkish misrule and atrocities, disseminated by the emissaries of Count Ignatieff, then Russian ambassador at Constantinople, and his friends, among whom, alas! were not a few of our own countrymen. It seems from all appearances that the events which led to the present war in the Far East were very similar.

If we believe all we are told with respect to the peaceful disposition of the present Emperor, the originator of the Hague International Court of Arbitration, we cannot but attribute the breaking out of hostilities with Japan to the aggressive policy and unscrupulous advice of Admiral Alexieff, the Ignatieff of the present generation, and his followers.

As in 1877 we were told that the mobilisation of the troops for the invasion of the Sultan's dominions was carried out in the most satisfactory manner and without difficulty, so in the present year we have been asked to believe that the mobilisation of the Manchurian army was effected with equal success. As a matter of fact, the mobilisation in both cases was attended by the greatest difficulty, and carried out in a manner far from satisfactory.

The Russians in 1877 declared that they had four times the number of troops mobilised for the invasion of Turkey than was really the case; so also at the commencement of the present war we were told that General Kuropatkin would,

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on his arrival in Manchuria, have at his disposal an army very much greater than that which in reality awaited him.

To continue the analogy: Russia in 1877 commenced her war with a number of troops totally inadequate to the plan of campaign adopted by her military experts, just as in the present year she found herself at the outbreak of hostilities so numerically weak as to be unable to assume the offensive with any reasonable prospect of success.

There is another point of resemblance between the two campaigns. During the Russo-Turkish War the St. Petersburg public were continually regaled with elaborate descriptions of engagements in which thousands of Turks lost their lives while only a few Russians were wounded, which led a humorous editor of a Paris newspaper to give place in its columns to a fictitious telegram, purporting to come from the seat of war, and stating that there had been a great battle in which ten thousand Turks had been killed, whereas in the Russian camp a little Cossack had been born!

Similar exaggerations appear in the Russian press respecting the present campaign.

In 1877 divided command and responsibility led to disastrous results, but notwithstanding the experiences of that campaign, the same system is being now pursued in the Far East, and the consequences appear to be equally, if not more, terrible.

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Here the analogy ceases, for whereas in 1876 Russia sent her Mediterranean squadron to American waters in order to escape capture by the Turkish fleet, in 1904 her Pacific squadron was retained at Port Arthur and Vladivostok, and with what results we all know.

In the former case there was great indignation at St. Petersburg for, considering the enormous amount of money which had been spent on the navy, and the credit which Admiral Popoff had claimed for the production of that wonderful battleship, *Peter the Great*, it was of course considered a national scandal that as soon as war became probable the Mediterranean fleet should seek to evade the enemy, while the *Peter the Great* was locked up in icebound Cronstadt, and the defence of the Russian littoral of the Black Sea was intrusted to the two Popoffkas, which took care to remain under cover of fortress guns.

It is curious that the 'Liberator of the Serfs' and the originator of the Hague International Tribunal should both have embarked in wars so needless and avoidable as are those that will always be associated with their names.

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CHAPTER XVII

MOBILISATION AND INDISCRETION

ALTHOUGH war with Turkey appeared probable, to say the least, as early as 1876, all preparations were, as usual, put off until the last moment, and as late as the end of that year orders were being placed with Krupp and other firms for the supply of guns and ammunition, and the tardy instructions then issued for the manufacture of rifles necessitated work being carried on night and day at fever heat in the Government factories.

The military depôts throughout the country were in a lamentable state. The officers in command of these establishments, when called upon to act, lost their heads, and such mistakes as the despatch to the troops of cartridges of wrong calibre were of frequent occurrence. Large quantities of cartridges, too, which had been long in store, were found to be absolutely useless.

The accounts of the mobilisation, published in the newspapers, represented it as being carried out with the greatest success. As a matter of fact, however, during the first few days the utmost confusion prevailed in all departments. Although traffic for passengers and goods was stopped as soon as the order for mobilisation was issued, and

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the railway companies were required to furnish a given number of military trains a day, such was the confusion and misunderstanding between the military and the railway authorities that it frequently happened that not more than two trains could be started in the twenty-four hours. It frequently also happened that when trains were ordered to be ready at given points for the entrainment of troops, no orders had been issued for the supply of fuel at these points. There were instances of troops being ordered to assemble at certain stations with food for three days, being detained there for more than a week without any provision being made for their rations. In one provincial government a case of this description led to a mutiny on the part of some of the troops.

As far as the men themselves are concerned there was little or no enthusiasm, and eye-witnesses informed me that at some of the stations the sobbing of the soldiers as they took leave of their friends looked more as if they were going to execution than to take part in a campaign; and exactly the same thing appears to be going on now when the reservists are called to the colours. (See Count Tolstoy's manifesto in the *Times* of Monday, 27th June 1904, and subsequent newspaper reports.)

In January 1877, when Russian statesmen were, for their own purposes, declaring that the army mobilised for the invasion of Turkey consisted of four hundred thousand men, it did not in fact

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amount to more than a hundred and eighteen thousand, with a large deficit of officers and a very inefficient and inadequate commissariat. The sanitary condition of this army also left much to be desired. No provision had been made for winter clothing, neither boots nor sheepskin coats having been prepared, and the Government was compelled to offer a certain sum to every reservist who provided his own sheepskin and boots.

The Ministers of Railways, the Interior, and of War, as well as the heads of different departments of the War Office and the Society of the Red Cross, sent officers to take possession of the different lines, and as they were all empowered to give what orders they thought proper, the result, as may be imagined, was a series of orders and counter-orders.

All the railways of the country through which the troops had to pass were required to send locomotives to the principal stations on the lines, but as these points had not been properly determined beforehand, it happened that at certain places there were a hundred locomotives where only ten were needed, and *vice-versâ*. The same was the case with regard to the rest of the rolling-stock, and as the moving of troops progressed, the confusion increased.

The engineers of the railway companies were not charged with the distribution of the trains, this duty being confined to staff and other officers who had been sent long before to the various lines

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to study the route of the troops and make the necessary arrangements. The majority of these officers displayed little knowledge or aptitude for the services required of them. It thus occurred that at some stations there was such a confusion of troops, empty carriages and locomotives, that it was impossible to move anything either backwards or forwards, and it was at last found necessary to have recourse to the civil engineers of the railway companies to extricate the military from the plight in which they found themselves.

At one station on the Odessa line the number of troops was so great, and the means of transport and supply of provisions so limited, that six regiments of infantry were obliged to continue their journey on foot in order to avoid death from cold or starvation. At another station on the same line an aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke Nicholas arrived with orders for a certain regiment of infantry which was expected there. Another regiment, however, appeared in its stead, and many days passed before any news was received of the expected regiment, which had gone astray in consequence of the general disorder and confusion. Similar cases occurred with regard to baggage, provisions, and ammunition. The infantry cartridges were very bad, and there is no doubt that there were many occasions on which large quantities of them were found to contain sawdust or sand instead of powder.

We were told officially at the time that not a

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single officer commanding a regiment, and not even the governors of the military circles concerned, had any idea that an order for mobilisation was contemplated, until the Imperial ukase was telegraphed to them, and that then, every one knowing his duty, the necessary steps were taken, and the troops mobilised with the greatest rapidity and with entire absence of confusion. As a matter of fact, the mobilisation was commenced a very considerable time before the public order was given.

As soon as war was declared, the Grand Duke Nicholas, to whom the command of the army of invasion had been given, proceeded to the south. The French military attaché, who was a great personal friend of his Imperial Highness, accompanied him. Although I was not myself present at the mobilisation, there were other sources of information, and it was of course my duty to report to my Government the lamentable shortcomings of the Russian army respecting this most important portion of its military organisation.

It was not long before I ascertained that the substance of my reports had leaked out. My first intimation of this was a change I noticed in the manner in which I was received in society, a change which became so marked that it was impossible for me even to go to a club, where the coolness I met with amounted almost to discourtesy. This was followed by an unmistakable change of manner towards me on the part of the Imperial family.

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It was the Emperor's custom, on entering the riding-school for the usual Sunday guard-mounting parade, to walk down the line of foreign officers, shaking hands with them and addressing a few words to each. On one occasion, however, at the time of which I am speaking, His Majesty, although greeting my colleagues, simply returned my salute and passed on.

I was then quite convinced that something must have occurred to account for this strange behaviour on the part of the Emperor and society in general. I therefore determined to make inquiries, and called on M. Valouieff, one of the ministers who had always shown me the greatest kindness, and who entertained the warmest feelings towards my country. He received me most cordially, and was surprised to hear my story as to the change of manner on the part of every one towards me. He said he was going to the palace on the next day to see the Empress, and promised, if possible, to ascertain the cause of the change I referred to, and begged me to call again in a few days to hear the result.

Meanwhile there was a large dinner-party at the British Embassy, at which Admiral Greig, the Controller of the Empire, was present. He also had always shown me great civility, and, like M. Valouieff, was extremely fond of England and the English. After dinner he expressed a wish to see me in private, and when we were alone asked me what I had done to offend my former

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friends. He said he had heard on all sides that I had spoken and written in disparagement of the Russian army, and that my conduct in this respect had caused great indignation throughout St. Petersburg, and that nowhere was that feeling stronger than at the palace.

I simply replied that I had never spoken ill of the Russian army, nor was it likely that I should do so in the Russian capital, and that with regard to my writings, if he referred to my despatches home, they were matters entirely between my Government and myself, and that no Russian had any more right to know their contents or challenge their accuracy than had an Englishman to criticise the reports of the Russian military attaché in London to his Government concerning our army. To this he assented, at the same time begging me to be most cautious, and advising me not, for the present at any rate, to go near the club, as the resentment there was most strong against me.

It was not long before the truth came out, and I discovered the cause of all that had recently happened. There had been a ball at the French Embassy given by General Leflo, the ambassador of the Republic. Never was there a more straightforward, kindly soldier than was this veteran of the French army, and he had always treated me with extreme friendliness. He was, however, more Russian than the Russians. To his eyes everything in Russia was good, the Russian army

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was the finest in the world, the Russian staff the most competent, and the Russian navy not to be surpassed.

Approaching me as I stood in the doorway leading into the ballroom, the old general asked me what I thought of the political horizon. 'Very dark,' was my reply. He then said, 'The Russians have 400,000 men mobilised and ready to march to Constantinople the moment the word is given.' 'Do you think so?' I answered; 'I do not myself think that they have anything like that number, in fact not half, and the deficit of officers is enormous.' This conversation had, of course, taken place in an undertone, but the old general now became excited and, placing his hand on my shoulder, exclaimed in a loud voice, 'I tell you the Russians have 400,000 men mobilised and waiting for the word to march to Constantinople, and believe me, young friend, any one who reports otherwise to his Government assumes a grave responsibility, remember, a very grave responsibility.' These remarks of the ambassador, uttered as they were at the top of his voice, had attracted many people to where we were standing, and caused no little sensation among the guests.

A few days afterwards a paragraph appeared in a Russian morning paper to the effect that the French ambassador had publicly read a sound lesson to the British military attaché at a ball at the French Embassy, and that the young English officer deserved all he received, or words to that

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effect. It was now high time that something should be done to clear the atmosphere, and to ascertain the actual cause of my being practically boycotted in Russian society.

After reading the above-mentioned newspaper paragraph I called on General Leflo, who said I was the very person he wanted to see, and showed me a letter he had written to the editor of the paper, and which, with my permission, he proposed to send for immediate insertion. In this letter he gave a straightforward denial to the statement that he had given me a lesson. He said that I was a friend of his, whom he had known a long time, and that I was not a person who would be likely to accept a lesson from any one, etc. I begged His Excellency not to enter into correspondence with the press on such a subject, thinking that in his position as French ambassador it would be more dignified to treat the whole matter with contempt, and to this he assented.

He then in a friendly way said that I was quite wrong in my conclusions as to the strength of the Russian army, that they certainly had 400,000 men fully equipped and with commissariat complete, and that Colonel Gaillard, the French military attaché who was present with the army, had reported to this effect. On my inquiring how he had become acquainted with the contents of my despatches on the mobilisation to my Government, he said that a certain English

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cabinet minister, who shall be nameless, had called on the French ambassador in London, and told him that in his opinion diplomacy was now powerless, that his military information from St. Petersburg went to show that the Russian field army was not anything approaching the strength which Russia would have the world believe, that the commissariat, etc., was in a most unsatisfactory condition, and that, as the Turks were probably as well informed as himself, they would naturally prefer to fight now than wait till Russia had time to prepare and bring the requisite number of men into the field.

The French ambassador in London of course reported this conversation and the views of the English minister to the minister of foreign affairs in Paris, who, naturally assuming that the military information sent to London from Russia must have come from the English military attaché in St. Petersburg, had written to General Leflo asking him who was right, Colonel Gaillard or Colonel Wellesley. General Leflo then proceeded to read to me the despatch he had received on the subject. When he had finished, I asked him if he had ever mentioned the contents of this despatch to any one in St. Petersburg, and he replied 'No, on my honour, not to a soul, except of course to the members of my personal staff'; and then, suddenly striking his forehead, he exclaimed, 'Yes, yes, I remember I did, and that is the origin of all the evil. I took it in my pocket

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to the Foreign Office and read it to Jomini. Yes, I remember doing so perfectly well, and that explains everything, but it had entirely escaped my memory.' The poor old ambassador was heart-broken at the result of his indiscretion, and I had to take my departure in order to put an end to his unceasing apologies, and there is no doubt that he was sincerely sorry for what he had done.

Now Jomini, the son of the famous author of *The Art of War*, was the head of the Asiatic department of the Foreign Office, and, with the exception of Prince Gortchakoff, was the cleverest man in that ministry, and one who hated England with a holy hatred. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the use he made of the information thus indiscreetly communicated to him by the French ambassador.

A few days afterwards I again called on M. Valouieff, who told me very much the same as I had heard from Admiral Greig.

When the mobilisation was nearly complete the Emperor decided to visit the troops before their start for the invasion of Turkey, and his original idea was merely to inspect them and wish them Godspeed. I soon learned that he had invited both the German and Austrian military attachés to accompany him, but to me he sent no such invitation, which fact I reported to my Government without further comment.

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CHAPTER XVIII

DEPARTURE FOR THE FRONT, AND UNPLEASANT RECEPTION

SHORTLY after the events recorded in the previous chapter, I received a telegram from London saying that Lord Derby, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had pointed out this act of apparent discourtesy to the Russian ambassador in London, who was about to proceed to St. Petersburg, and would personally express to the Emperor the feelings of the Queen and Her Majesty's Government on the subject, adding that I should now probably receive an invitation to accompany the Emperor, which invitation I was directed to accept.

When Count Schouvaloff, the Russian ambassador in London, arrived, he had an interview with the Emperor on the matter, with the result that on 17th May 1877, the day before His Majesty's departure for the mobilisation, I received a note from Count Adlerberg, the Court Minister and the Emperor's right-hand man, begging me, if possible, to call on him that evening, adding that if this were inconvenient, he would be glad

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if I would name an hour when he could find me at home.

I called on him that evening at nine, and was received with cold civility. He said that Count Schouvaloff had told the Emperor that the Queen and Her Majesty's Government were sorry to hear that the Emperor had invited some of my colleagues to accompany him to the army without extending a similar invitation to me. This, said His Excellency, was most unreasonable, as I must be aware that both my German and Austrian colleagues, being aides-de-camp to their respective sovereigns, were in a different position to that held by myself. I had an easy reply in pointing out that Colonel Gaillard, the French military attaché, who had been present during the whole of the mobilisation, being an officer in the service of a Republican Government, had not even a sovereign to be aide-de-camp to, and that therefore the Count's argument could scarcely hold good. He smiled, and said that in any case he was directed by the Emperor to invite me to the Imperial headquarters, that as His Majesty and staff were starting the following morning, he imagined I should not be ready to accompany them, but that if I would, at my convenience, come to Ploeshti, in Roumania, where the Imperial headquarters would at first be established, and would there call on him, he would inform me what the Emperor's wishes were in regard to my future movements. I thanked Count

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Adlerberg and retired, and, having reported my interview by telegraph, awaited Lord Derby's instructions. A few hours brought me the answer, which was to the effect that I was to accept the invitation if I thought it wise to do so.

A few days later I left St. Petersburg and made my way to Bucharest, the Roumanian capital, which I reached on 13th June. The morning following my arrival I proceeded in uniform to the Imperial headquarters at Ploeshti, a town some half-hour by rail to the north of Bucharest, and presented myself to Count Adlerberg, who received me with much more cordiality than he showed on the occasion of my last visit to him on the eve of his departure from St. Petersburg. He told me that the Emperor thought that I should like to be attached to the headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, that arrangements to this effect had been made, and he begged me to call upon his Imperial Highness, who had full instructions on the subject.

I should here say that the Grand Duke Nicholas had always treated me with the greatest kindness and civility. He was invariably pleasant and free in his manner, and was wont to treat those whom he liked with greater familiarity than is usual with persons in his position.

At the camp near St. Petersburg where the annual manœuvres took place, he used to go out

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of his way to help me, and if any night surprise or attack was in contemplation, he invariably sent to inform me of the fact, so that I might not miss it, and I could quote many other instances of his special favour towards myself. When, therefore, Count Adlerberg told me that I was to be attached to the staff of his Imperial Highness, I felt relieved at the thought that, however disagreeable my presence with the Russian army might be to other officers, I should at any rate find a friend in the Grand Duke, who would be above the petty feelings which prompted such singular behaviour on the part of his inferiors.

I accordingly proceeded with a lighter heart to the Grand Duke's headquarters, which were in a large house surrounded by a garden and close to the road. Two sentries stood at the foot of a flight of steps leading up to the house and, as I approached, I saw the Grand Duke at the top of the steps talking to a Russian officer, and behind him stood one of his aides-de-camp, Captain Scalon, an old friend of mine.

When the Grand Duke caught sight of me, he dismissed the officer to whom he had been speaking, and turning abruptly away, entered the house.

Captain Scalon, to whom I made a sign that I wished to see the Grand Duke, beckoned to me to remain where I was until called for. In a few minutes he returned and invited me into the

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house, but by his manner, which was haughty and offensive, I at once saw that my interview with the Commander-in-Chief was not likely to be as pleasant as I had anticipated. I was not mistaken.

When I entered the room in which the Grand Duke was waiting to receive me, instead of shaking hands with me as he had always previously done, he drew himself up, and addressed me in the following manner: 'Colonel Wellesley, I have been ordered by the Emperor, my brother, to receive you at my headquarters, an order which, whatever my personal feelings may be, I am obliged to obey. Permit me, however, to tell you that it has come to my knowledge that you have reported to your Government in a disparaging manner on the mobilisation of my army, a mobilisation at which you were not yourself present, and concerning the details of which you were therefore absolutely ignorant. As I said before, I must obey the Emperor's orders and receive you at my headquarters. I warn you, however, that I shall have you strictly watched, and that if you say, or do, or write anything of which I do not approve, I will turn you out of my army (*Je vous chasserai de mon armée*),' and as he uttered these last words the Grand Duke snapped his fingers in the air.

Then turning round towards Captain Scalon, who was standing behind him, and who appeared to rejoice in what he apparently considered my

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downfall and disgrace, the Grand Duke added, with a sweeping gesture of the hand: 'I say this to you, Colonel Wellesley, before all these gentlemen because, as they know that I am obliged to receive you at my headquarters, I wish them also to know the conditions on which I do so. Do you perfectly understand?' 'Only too well, your Imperial Highness; you have made it very plain,' was my reply. He then offered me his hand, which I respectfully declined, and with a bow I left the room.

The fact that the Grand Duke made use of the words 'before all these gentlemen,' shows that he had evidently intended to make this speech in the presence of his entire staff, although when he waved his hand towards where he thought they were standing there was nobody there but my friend (?) Scalon, who presumably had not had sufficient time to collect his colleagues before my audience commenced.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the insolence of the Grand Duke's manner whilst delivering this lecture, and when at the conclusion he snapped his fingers, it was almost beyond my power to control myself.

I saw clearly, however, that were I to make any appropriate reply, the Grand Duke, in his then state of mind, would have been tempted to say something which, addressed to a British officer in uniform, might have led to most serious consequences. I therefore quickly decided to say

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nothing. I at once made up my mind, however, to return immediately to Bucharest, put on plain clothes, report the insolence of my reception to the home authorities, and await further instructions.

I should before have said that the word had evidently been given that I should be badly received, for on my way from Count Adlerberg to the Grand Duke Nicholas's headquarters, I met several officers of the Imperial Guard, who not only declined to answer my bow, but deliberately looked me up and down in an extremely insolent manner. Arrived at Bucharest, I did as I had decided, put on plain clothes and despatched a telegram to Lord Derby, saying that I had been received in a most insolent manner by the Grand Duke, that I had consequently not remained at his headquarters, that I was sending details by post, and should await further instructions. The same evening I wrote and sent my despatch through the ordinary post.

I knew that my despatch would be read by the Russian authorities as it passed through the post-office, and was not sorry that the Emperor should thus be made aware of the manner in which his brother had carried out His Majesty's instructions as to my reception at his headquarters.

I then wrote to Count Adlerberg, telling him that according to his instructions I had presented myself to the Grand Duke, who had imposed conditions with regard to his receiving me at his

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headquarters, such as I did not feel justified in accepting without the orders of my Government. I further stated that I had returned to Bucharest, had telegraphed to Lord Derby, and should await his lordship's instructions.

I also wrote to General Hall, the Grand Duke's chief aide-de-camp, begging him to inform his Imperial Highness that having heard from his own lips the conditions on which he consented to receive me at his headquarters, I felt unable to accept the invitation without reference to my Government.

The following morning a general officer in full uniform, and covered with decorations, called on me at my hotel. He came from the Imperial headquarters, and said that he had been sent by Count Adlerberg to beg me to reconsider my decision, and to assure me that if I would consent to return to the Grand Duke I should be received in a manner in every way satisfactory to myself. Having thanked the general for his visit, I said that the matter was completely out of my hands, that I had reported my interview with the Grand Duke to Lord Derby, both by telegram and despatch, and that I could not do otherwise than await his lordship's reply.

Scarcely had this officer left me when General Hall also appeared in full uniform, sent by the Grand Duke Nicholas to beg that I would think no more of what had passed or of words spoken in anger, and that I would return to Ploeshti. I

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explained to the general that there were words which, though spoken in anger, when addressed by a general commanding an army to a foreign officer in uniform, could not be so easily disposed of, and it was impossible for me to return without special orders from Her Majesty's Government.

On the arrival of my despatch in London I received a telegram from Lord Derby approving my conduct, and desiring me to wait for further orders. This telegram was shortly followed by another, telling me that the Russian ambassador in London had been informed of what had occurred, and had been told that the Queen and Her Majesty's Government were deeply grieved that an officer in Her Majesty's service had been thus received at the Russian headquarters, that neither the Queen nor the Government had any desire to keep a *persona ingrata* at such headquarters, but that, as long as he remained there, they must insist on his being treated as an officer and a gentleman of a friendly power, or words to that effect. The contents of this telegram were subsequently confirmed to me by Prince Gortchakoff.

The telegram went on to say that Prince Gortchakoff, the Chancellor of the Empire, would arrive in Bucharest in the course of a few days, that he would invite me personally on the part of the Emperor to join His Majesty's headquarters instead of those of the Grand Duke Nicholas, that I was to accept the invitation, and report what

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preparations were made for my reception, and leaving it to me whether, in present circumstances, I thought it advisable to remain.

Accordingly, on June 27th I received a note from Prince Gortchakoff, whom I, of course, already knew, asking me to call on him. When I went into his room the aged statesman shook me warmly by both hands, and almost sobbed on my shoulder, saying that nothing had ever pained him so much as the report of what had occurred between the Grand Duke Nicholas and myself. In the warmest terms he expressed his gratitude to me for having kept my temper, adding that had I not done so it would probably have led to war between his country and mine, 'and,' he said, 'we have plenty on our hands as it is.' The Prince then invited me, on behalf of the Emperor, to join the Imperial headquarters, saying that my reception there would be most cordial, and that the Emperor was also exceedingly grateful for the manner in which I had conducted myself during my interview with his brother. The chancellor, as I left him, begged me at once to telegraph the result of my interview with him to Lord Derby, so that the Queen and the Government, who had taken so painful an interest in the matter, might be informed of its satisfactory termination. Prince Gortchakoff, although the most astute statesman of his day, gave one the first-sight impression of being a simple-minded, straightforward official, whose one object was to keep

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the peace. It was difficult to believe that the owner of the kind eyes which beamed through his large gold-rimmed spectacles could have had the heart to tear up the Black Sea Treaty!

Meanwhile, on June 27th, the Russians commenced to cross the Danube from Simnitza to Sistova, and a few days later had established their bridge of boats across the river. These operations I had of course missed, having been in plain clothes at Bucharest awaiting orders.

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CHAPTER XIX

INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPEROR

HAVING previously bought a wagon and horses and other equipment necessary for the campaign, and having also engaged servants, I started on the evening of July 1st on my road to the Danube. The first part of my journey was by train to Giurgevo, and thence by road to Simnitza. It was already dark when the train steamed into Giurgevo station. An artillery duel had been going on all day between that town and the Turkish fortress of Rustchuk, on the other side of the river, and the Russian shells having set fire to several buildings in Rustchuk, the whole river for the first few miles on the road to Simnitza was grandly illuminated.

I had learned from Prince Gortchakoff that although the Russians had established themselves on the southern bank of the river, the Emperor himself still had his headquarters on the northern bank near Simnitza, and did not intend crossing for some time.

On the following day I met several former friends and acquaintances on the road, but they did not appear best pleased to see me. I reached

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the Danube at about 9 P.M. that evening, too late to call at headquarters. I therefore established myself for the night among a quantity of wagons and tents, which formed a very unsavoury encampment in a sea of mud close to the river bank.

How my arrival was discovered I am at a loss to understand, but I had not been there more than half an hour before a general officer called to welcome me on the part of the Emperor, and to say that His Majesty would be glad to see me before breakfast on the following morning. Accordingly, the next day, I went to the Emperor's headquarters. A small gate opened into a long, narrow garden, at the extreme end of which was a cottage occupied by the Emperor and overlooking the river. On the right of the garden was a huge marquee used as a mess-tent for the Emperor and his staff.

Throughout the campaign His Majesty almost invariably breakfasted with his staff and the foreign officers at about noon, and dined with them at six, having his early breakfast and supper in his own quarters. Sometimes, but rarely, he breakfasted and dined in private.

As I entered the garden I found it full of officers, guardsmen, and others whom I had known personally, many of them intimately, in St. Petersburg. These, however, either pretended not to recognise me, or turned away as I approached. There was one remarkable exception, however, in the case of a general whom I had never before

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seen, but whose aiguillettes showed him to be an 'aide-de-camp général' of the Emperor. He came up to me, and taking me by the hand said, 'You don't know who I am, Colonel Wellesley?' to which I replied, 'General Ignatieff, I think. Although I have never before had the pleasure of seeing you, I recognised you at once from your photographs.' At that moment I was informed by a messenger that the Emperor, who was going to breakfast privately in his cottage, would see me afterwards.

The staff breakfast being now ready, General Ignatieff took me to the tent and gave me a seat beside him. I may here say that the whole time I was with the Russian army during this campaign I had no better friend and received no greater kindness than I did from General Ignatieff, who was always ready to give me a helping hand. On no single occasion when I went to him for information did he either refuse it, or did it turn out incorrect after he had given it. This is the more remarkable, as the anti-English feelings of this former Russian ambassador at Constantinople were as pronounced as they were universally known.

Breakfast had scarcely commenced when I saw at the entrance to the tent, just opposite to where I was sitting, the well-known figure of the Grand Duke Nicholas, whom I had not seen since our unpleasant interview at Ploeshti. He looked round the table as if trying to find some one, and

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when his eyes fell on me, he beckoned me to come out to him.

As soon as I had joined him he said, 'This is a nice scrape you have got me into with the Emperor, the Queen, and your Government. Surely it was rather hard on me that you should have taken so seriously words that were uttered with perhaps not sufficient consideration?'

I replied that I imagined the Grand Duke would himself be extremely indignant if a Russian officer invited to an English camp were spoken to in the same terms as those which his Imperial Highness had thought fit to address to me on the occasion in question. 'Well, yes,' he said, 'I suppose you are right. Anyhow, I am sorry for what took place. Will you shake hands and think no more about it?'

We shook hands, and the Grand Duke then said, 'Now, please, let the past be forgotten, and if ever you require anything during the campaign, come to me and I will do all in my power to serve you.'

I then returned to General Ignatieff, and, after breakfast, was told that His Majesty desired to see me. I entered the cottage, and in a room on the first floor found two of the young Grand Dukes, the Emperor's sons, and I was conversing with them when the Emperor entered from a smaller room beyond. His Majesty's first words to me were, 'Have you seen my brother, and is it all right?' and on my replying in the affirmative, he led the way into his own room, a little place

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about twelve feet square, closing the door behind him.

In one corner of the room stood a card-table, which His Majesty used throughout the campaign as his writing-table, and two chairs, one of which he took for himself, offering the other to me.

After telling me how grieved he had been when he heard of what had occurred between his brother and myself, the Emperor expressed the hope that I would not resent his saying a few words which he had in his mind on the subject. His Majesty then went on to say that I had reported in a disparaging manner on the mobilisation of the Russian army, that I had always been received very kindly in Russia, that he himself had invariably treated me with marked civility; and after adding a few flattering remarks with regard to myself, said that I was the last person whom he would have suspected of writing unkind things with regard to his army. At the conclusion of His Majesty's remarks, I begged to be allowed to say that the question as to whether my reports were correct or the reverse was a matter not for the Russian Government but for my own, who would naturally, if dissatisfied with my work, recall me.

I also pointed out that the Emperor had in London an officer holding exactly the same position as I held in St. Petersburg, and that I could not for a moment imagine that His Majesty would expect from that officer nothing but favourable reports with regard to the British army, but that,

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on the contrary, he would expect him to report truthfully, according to the best of his ability, on the army of the country to which he was accredited.

His Majesty smiled, and said, 'Yes, that is true, but nevertheless I could not help being very indignant when I heard of the reports you had sent home, and I dare say you observed the alteration in my manner towards you during the last few weeks I was in St. Petersburg.'

I replied that I could not fail to notice it, and that it had pained me extremely, to which he said, 'It is all over now, and we will think no more about it.'

The Emperor then laying his hand on my shoulder, led me to the window and described to me the crossing of the Danube by his troops. He said that in order to deceive the Turks as to the place where the crossing would be attempted, it was deemed advisable to make a strong demonstration opposite the Turkish fortress of Nicopolis, and it had therefore been arranged that he should go there with his staff for this purpose.

While this feint was in progress, added His Majesty, a large vessel was seen coming from the direction of Simnitza, where the actual crossing was being made, and he and his staff all thought that the attempt had failed, as it was believed that this ship belonged to the Turks, and had, in all probability, been instrumental in stopping the crossing of the river by his troops. As, however, the vessel approached, it was discovered, to

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his immense relief, that it belonged to the Roumanian service.

After a few more general remarks I took my leave of His Majesty, and from that time until I left him after the fall of Plevna, I received nothing but kindness at his hands.

The nearest approach to anything disagreeable was an incident which happened very soon after the events which I have just described. We had crossed the Danube, and the Imperial headquarters were then at Biela. One evening, in the middle of dinner, an aide-de-camp entered the tent and whispered something to the Emperor, who immediately rose, and beckoning me to follow him, left the marquee. Without saying a word we followed the aide-de-camp for some considerable distance, until we reached a small field-hospital which had been established in a garden. I soon ascertained that the Emperor's object was to show me two Bulgarian peasants whom the Turks had cruelly mutilated. One of them, who had died just before our arrival, was lying on a stretcher with his head cut open, and his poor wife moaning piteously beside him. Some of his fingers had also been cut off. The other was in bed in a tent, with both his hands bandaged. A surgeon removing the bandages disclosed the wretched man's hands, with all the fingers hacked off. The Emperor then turned towards me, and pointing to one of the man's hands, said, '*Voilà ce que font Messieurs*

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vos protégés les Turcs.' We then returned to dinner.

The position of the Emperor's headquarters at Biela always appeared to me in the early part of the campaign to be a most precarious one, situated as it was in a village surrounded and commanded by steep hills, and with nothing but a brigade of infantry, three squadrons of cavalry, and a couple of batteries of artillery as an escort. There was no protection against the enemy towards the south-east. Had the Emperor encamped on the north side of the bridge which led into the town, holding the hill with his infantry, he would have been comparatively safe; but, as it was, his camp was in a hole with a river in rear—not an agreeable position in case of retreat. Subsequent changes in the distribution of the troops towards the east made the position more secure.

While on the subject of the headquarter camp, no words can describe its filthy condition. It was absolutely innocent of all sanitary arrangements, and although, as I have elsewhere pointed out, Russia is the strangest mixture of luxury and barbarism, it always appeared to me inconceivable that the Emperor, who was continually moving about the camp, should have tolerated such a disgusting state of things.

It sometimes happened that we had our meals in the open, and without the covering of a tent. Such was the plague of flies, attracted by all the horrors of war, that no sooner was a plate put

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before one than its contents were black with the flies that clustered on them, and on such occasions we each of us had behind our chair a soldier with a branch of leaves with which he endeavoured as best he could to protect our food. In such circumstances it was indeed surprising that the persons responsible for the Emperor's health should not have taken even the most elementary precautions in the way of sanitation.

When Nicopolis fell we were at a village called Pavlo, and one day Hassan Pasha, who had been Turkish commander of that fortress, was conveyed under escort to the Emperor's headquarters in order to surrender his sword. He was received with great civility, which he did not, however, appear to appreciate. His Majesty, with the intention of saying something courteous, remarked that he hoped not to remain long on Turkish territory, to which the Pasha replied, 'That depends more upon you than it does upon the Sultan.' When asked whether there were any English officers in Nicopolis, he scornfully answered that to serve with giaours was against all Mussulman law. The Emperor, who, of course, spoke through an interpreter, then assured him that he would be well treated. 'I am a soldier and ready to die,' replied Hassan, 'and if you treat me well it will be for your own sake, and not for mine. I fought until all my cartridges were expended, and my men would no longer advance, although I had killed three of them with my own hand for refusing

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to do so.' This Turkish commander was very indignant at having been deprived of his sword by the officer commanding his escort, and still more so at having been mounted on a tired Cossack horse instead of on his own, for fear of his attempting to escape. He was sent as a prisoner to Russia.

The following morning I was awakened early by shouting in the street, and on looking out saw a party of Cossacks who had brought in five colours captured from the Turks at Nicopolis, and were showing their trophies to the Bulgarians, much to the delight of the latter.

I, of course, met many newspaper correspondents of all nationalities at the front. There was great jealousy among them, and curiously enough I was approached more than once to act as arbitrator in their disputes. With regard to these gentlemen, the happiest combination was that of Archibald Forbes of the *Daily News* and Frederick Villiers, who then represented the *Graphic*. Each in his own line was, in my opinion, *facile princeps*. They nearly always went about together, the pencil of the one depicting the scenes that the pen of the other described. Forbes had a marvellous military instinct which invariably took him to the right place at the right time, and his lightning grasp of a military situation was truly extraordinary. The following is one of many instances that could be quoted in confirmation of this. On the 23rd August 1877, Suleiman Pasha made a desperate attack on the Russian

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position at Shipka, with superior numbers. The fight continued all day, and towards evening the position of the Russian troops became anything but pleasant, and the danger of their being cut off or even surrounded was imminent. At this critical moment Forbes saw a few hundred mounted infantry, followed by other reinforcements, hurrying up under General Radetsky. His quick appreciation that this was all the Russians required to enable them to win the day, enabled him to quit the field before the conclusion of the battle, and to gallop off to send the news to his paper. On his way he called at the headquarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas, and announced to him the victory of the Russian arms. His Imperial Highness took him straight to the Emperor, to whom he explained the position of affairs when he left the field, by means of a piece of chalk on a card-table. His Majesty was so delighted at the intelligence that he offered Forbes a carriage and horses to convey him to the Danube, with a view to expediting his journey to Bucharest, whence his telegram to the *Daily News* would be sent. Forbes's prediction as to the result of the day's fighting turned out to be correct.

The losses suffered by the Russian infantry in their attacks upon the Turkish entrenched positions before Plevna had been so great, that many Russian inventors were led to devise means for the protection of troops in the open.

One morning, as soon as breakfast was over,

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the Emperor announced the arrival of a man from Moscow, who had brought with him some iron shields, which he had invented with a view to their being carried by infantry advancing to the attack. He claimed that these shields were sufficiently light to be carried, and strong enough to be bullet-proof.

His Majesty then suggested that we should all go to a trial of this invention, which was about to take place. On arrival at the ground we found a quantity of the shields already in position at different distances, from three hundred yards upwards.

The inventor was present in person, and, judging from his beaming countenance, he not only anticipated success at the trial, but also a large Government order to follow. An instructor of musketry was present, with a rifle and ammunition.

After a short preliminary conversation with the inventor, and an examination of the shields, the Emperor desired that the trial should commence, whereupon the musketry instructor fired at the first shield. The bullet struck fairly in the centre, and on examination it was seen that the plate had bulged, but had not been perforated. There was a look of superior confidence on the inventor's face, which increased as the trial proceeded, for at every distance the shields were bulged only and there was no single case of actual penetration.

As these shields had been designed to protect the Emperor's soldiers not from Russian, but from

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Turkish fire, and knowing that one of the officers present happened to possess a Turkish rifle and ammunition, I ventured to suggest to the Emperor that the trial should be repeated, and that the enemy's rifle should be used, at the same time telling His Majesty that one of the officers present had such a rifle, as well as cartridges. The Emperor appeared pleased at the idea, and the rifle was sent for.

This suggestion on my part was an unfortunate one so far as the inventor was concerned, for when the Turkish rifle was used the shields were pierced at every distance, the bullets going through them as through a sheet of paper. The inventor's countenance lost its triumphant expression and grew longer and longer as the effect of each shot was recorded, until the Emperor and his staff left the ground. Needless to say that no more was heard of these protective shields.

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CHAPTER XX

MISSION TO LONDON

TOWARDS the end of July 1877 everything was dark and gloomy at the Imperial headquarters, which were still at Biela. Not only had the Russian advance been checked by the defence of Plevna, but from all directions, even where mere skirmishes had taken place, the news was almost invariably adverse to the Russian arms. These circumstances had a very marked effect on the Emperor, whose face, always sad, now commenced to betray signs of grave anxiety.

On the evening of the 29th of that month, after dinner, I was strolling about the camp with General Milutin, the Minister of War. This officer was usually most reticent with regard to the progress of the campaign, so much so that one never liked to broach the subject to him. I was much surprised therefore, when on this occasion he of his own accord commenced talking about the horrors of the war and the reverses which the Russian arms had suffered, hinting, as it appeared to me, how pleased he would be if arrangements could then and there be made which would lead to peace between the contending countries.

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The minister was very guarded and vague in the expressions he made use of, but I could not help suspecting that he was feeling the ground in order to ascertain whether he could enlist my services with a view to the mediation of Great Britain. If my opinion as to what General Milutin intended to convey to me had been unfounded, he would, of course, have been most indignant at the very idea of such a meaning being attributed to his words. It was therefore necessary to be extremely cautious in my remarks. As, however, he pursued the conversation in the direction which had made me suspect his wishes, I made an observation which elicited from him a reply to the effect that the services of some foreign power with a view to mediation would not be unwelcome.

My course was then clear, and I remarked that although I was in no way authorised to say so, I felt certain in my own mind that Her Majesty's Government would only be too pleased if any act on their part might lead to a speedy termination of the war. General Milutin then asked me how I could ascertain whether the British Government would consent to act as suggested. I replied that I would myself go straight to England and lay any proposals that the Emperor might confide to me before Her Majesty's Government. The minister appeared both pleased and astonished, saying, 'Do you mean that you would go to England on your own responsibility, and without

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obtaining leave?' My reply was 'Certainly,' and we then parted.

The following morning General Milutin told me that he had mentioned the subject of our conversation to the Emperor, and that His Majesty wished to see me on the matter.

I found the Emperor sitting at the corner of a garden which surrounded his cottage, and at the same card-table at which he sat during my first interview with him after my misunderstanding with the Grand Duke Nicholas. He asked me to sit down, and giving me a cigarette said, 'The Minister of War informs me that you are ready to go to England with the view of ascertaining whether your Government would be prepared to assist in the direction of peace. Do you, my dear Wellesley, really feel justified in starting without the permission of your Government?'

I replied that I was quite sure that Lord Beaconsfield would wish me to do so, and it was then settled that I should start at twelve o'clock that night. His Majesty was kind enough to add that he would give me one of his own carriages, and would order relays of escorts to take me to the Danube.

The Emperor had evidently discussed the matter thoroughly with General Milutin, and probably also with General Ignatieff, for without any hesitation he commenced, 'I am prepared to make peace on the following terms.'

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His Majesty then slowly and distinctly stated his conditions.

As he had no notes, or at any rate none that I could see, the Emperor must have learned his lesson well—I might almost say by heart.

His Majesty thanked me most cordially for undertaking the journey. I had, of course, noted with pencil on a sheet of paper each condition as he stated it, and suggested that I should return to my tent in order to commit them to paper in French, so that His Majesty might see and confirm the document before I started. I then took my leave, His Majesty saying, 'Then at midnight a carriage and escort will be ready for you.' I returned to my quarters, and was busy translating my notes into French, when Count Ignatieff came to see me, telling me that the Emperor had informed him of our conversation, and that His Majesty had directed him to ascertain from me when the document would be ready, so that he might call for it and take it to him. He came for it in about an hour, took it to the Emperor, and returned with a flattering message from him to the effect that it could not have been more correct if he had written it himself.

Punctually at midnight the carriage and escort appeared at my tent, and, having sent a telegram to London to say that I was coming on a special mission from the Emperor, I started on my road to the Danube, crossed the bridge of boats, and

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driving thence to Giurgevo, caught a train to Bucharest, which I reached the following afternoon.

Here I heard of the great battle which had been fought at Plevna the previous day, when the 9th and 11th Russian Army Corps, commanded respectively by General Krüdener and Prince Shehoffskoi, were defeated by Osman Pasha with great loss.

From Bucharest I travelled night and day *viâ* Vienna to London, where I arrived at 6 P.M., after a journey of eight days and nights without stopping.

I was met at the station by Mr. Bourke, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who told me that the Prime Minister desired that I should go straight to his house in Whitehall, which I did.

His lordship received me at once, and asked me the nature of the mission I had undertaken. Not having my papers with me I could but roughly indicate the conditions on which the Emperor of Russia was ready to make peace with Turkey. Lord Beaconsfield said that the matter was a most important one, and that anything that Her Majesty's Government could do with a view to promoting peace would be a task most agreeable to them, but, he added, the defeat of the Russians at Plevna, the news of which had not reached the Imperial headquarters until after the Emperor had communicated to me the conditions on which he would make peace, would, he was

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afraid, make the Turks less inclined to accept them.

I was kept three weeks in England, and then returned to the seat of war with a memorandum in answer to the one I had brought.

It was to the effect that Her Majesty's Government would only be too pleased to intervene on behalf of peace should an opportunity arise, but that considering the success of the Turkish arms since my interview with the Emperor, they did not see any reasonable hope in that direction at present.

Subsequent events proved that the Turks would have done well to accept the terms then proposed, which were far less onerous than were those afterwards imposed on them by the Congress of Berlin.

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CHAPTER XXI

DISAGREEABLES

I HAVE, I think, said enough in these pages to show that my position at the Imperial headquarters was not particularly pleasant, notwithstanding the exceptional kindness of the Emperor, and I feel sure that had I taken the trouble to complain personally to His Majesty of the treatment I received from certain persons on the staff, they would have paid dearly for whatever passing pleasure they may have derived from their ungentlemanlike behaviour towards a foreign officer. I did not, however, think it worth while to attach so much importance to their conduct, and generally found, when things went a little too far, that a hint at complaining was sufficient to put them right.

The threatening movements of our fleet in the Mediterranean were of course a constant source of irritation and anxiety to the Emperor, and of unpleasantness to me, as both His Majesty and the Grand Duke Nicholas were continually complaining to me about them. At the beginning of July 1877 the news came that it had been sent to Gallipoli, and the Emperor immediately informed

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me of it. The same evening, however, at dinner, he said that, according to later information just received, the destination of the fleet was Besika Bay and not Gallipoli, which made matters a little, though only a little, better.

I will now give a few specimens of the petty annoyances to which I was subjected. One day, as I was leaving headquarters for a short time, and thought it probable that they would be moved before my return, I told my Russian servant Egor, if that were the case, to ascertain from the proper authority what quarters I was to occupy in the new camp, and to take possession of them for me. During my absence a move had been made, and, on my return, Egor took me to an underground hut which had been told off for my occupation, which he had cleaned as best he could, and in which I found my things prepared for me. I was just beginning to change my clothes when I heard loud talking between my servant and some one else outside. On going out to ascertain what was the matter, I found a Russian general belonging to the headquarters staff ordering my servant to remove my things from the hut, which, he said, was required for some one else. On hearing this, I desired the general to inform me for whose accommodation my quarters were wanted. His answer was that Don Carlos was expected, and that there was no other place for him. I had just said to him that as my quarters had been officially allotted to me, I had not the

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slightest intention of giving them up to Don Carlos or any one else, when Prince Emile Wittgenstein appeared on the scene, his attention having been attracted by our somewhat animated conversation. He was a man advanced in years, and a *grand seigneur* of the old style. He likewise held the high position of aide-de-camp général to the Emperor. He had long given up active service, and lived entirely abroad; but when war was declared, thinking it his duty, notwithstanding his great age, to accompany the Emperor, he returned to Russia for that purpose. As soon as he heard that I was asked to give up my quarters to Don Carlos, his anger knew no bounds, and turning upon the offending general, his junior, of course, the Prince gave vent to his indignation in the plainest terms. He told him that he would not have dared to ask the German, Austrian, or indeed any other foreign officer to turn out of his quarters, and that he had picked me out simply because I was an Englishman, and in order to gratify his petty political spite against the country which I represented, saying in conclusion that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and that if any more of this sort of thing came to his knowledge he would immediately report it to the Emperor. The poor general, staggered by this outburst of temper, uttered a feeble apology, and rode away in search of some other abode for Don Carlos, and leaving me in undisputed possession of my subterranean mansion.

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It is one of the rules of the Russian court, that when foreign officers are attached to the Imperial headquarters in the field they are considered as guests of the Emperor, and are provided with transport, horses, and all other necessary camp equipment. In addition, their servants receive from the field treasury once a week a sum equivalent to about ten francs a day in lieu of board.

As previously explained, I did not receive my invitation to accompany the army until it was too late for me to start at the same time as the Emperor. On my arrival at the seat of war I thought it advisable to provide my own transport, etc.: in the first place, because I considered it improbable that such provision had been made for me owing to the fact that I had not been invited till the eve of the Emperor's departure from St. Petersburg; and secondly, because, on account of the delicate circumstances attending my invitation, I felt very reluctant to ask a favour of any sort. After I had been some months with the army, my servant Egor, having discovered that the valets of the other foreign officers were in receipt of ten francs a day from the headquarters paymaster, came to me with the request that he also should be allowed to attend treasury on the following Saturday. Thinking it wrong that a precedent should be created whereby the British military attaché's servant was treated differently from those of

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other foreign officers, I gave my permission, much to Egor's delight. After attending treasury, however, his countenance fell, and he reported to me that the officer in charge had refused him the week's money on the plea that I had come to headquarters uninvited, and giving him to understand that my presence there was anything but desirable. I then instructed him to go to treasury the following week and demand his pay, not only for that week, but also for the previous one which had been refused, and told him this time to say that he had come by my orders. These tactics succeeded no better, and again Egor returned empty-handed. I was now forced to play my trump card, and told my servant to attend again on the next pay-day, present my compliments to the paymaster, and tell him that if he did not at once pay him, not only the amount due for the last three weeks, but also all arrears from the date of my first arrival, I should personally report the matter to the Emperor. This threat acted like magic, and Egor returned with a smile on his face, and a bag of gold in his hand.

Whether the treasurer had charged for my servant all the time, and put the money into his own pocket, or whether he was actuated by feelings of antagonism towards England, I cannot tell. Probably both elements entered into his calculation, and he was not sorry for having the opportunity of combining a little mild robbery with indulgence in his national animosity.

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This hatred of England, and everything English, was carried to such a pitch that one evening after dark a young officer in one of the cavalry regiments of the guard, and whom I had known long before he joined, entered my tent, almost by stealth, in order to tell me that he had got into sad disgrace with his comrades for associating with me, and had been ordered not to do so any more. He hoped that I would understand that in his junior position he could not but obey, and trusted that I would not think his personal feelings towards me had in any way changed. Had I reported this circumstance in the highest quarters the young officer's seniors would no doubt have been severely reprimanded, but it was not worth while to take any notice of such puerile conduct, especially as, had I done so, I should have betrayed my young friend's confidence. I therefore told him that I quite understood his difficulty, and hoped that we should before long meet again in pleasanter circumstances.

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CHAPTER XXII

MORE DISAGREEABLES

On one occasion, in the early part of the war, while the Imperial headquarters were at Pavlo, I found myself in a sorry plight owing to Egor and my transport drivers being all prostrated by Danube fever at the same time. I therefore applied to the general officer at headquarters with whom foreign officers had chiefly to do, asking him to help me out of my difficulty by lending me a couple of Cossacks of the escort to attend to my horses, clothes, etc. I should mention that the Cossacks were frequently told off for similar duties. Notwithstanding this, the general hesitated to comply with my request, and referred me to another general officer, who was extremely rude, and asked me what I wanted the men for, although the reason had been contained in my request. I again explained the position in which the prostration of my servants by fever had placed me, pointing out that it was absolutely necessary to me to have some one to look after my horses, and that, as no civilian labour was procurable, I had no alternative but to ask for his assistance. He then asked me how many horses

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I had. I answered five, upon which he suggested that I should distribute them among the cavalry regiments. Now, considering that we were in daily fear of being driven back across the Danube by Mehemet Ali's army, which would assuredly have been our fate had an attack been made, I did not relish the idea of having myself to collect the horses from the different cavalry regiments in case of an alarm, and therefore told the general that his suggestion was not practicable. He said that he could not give me an answer at that moment, but would send one the following morning. What I have related took place after dinner in the large mess marquee. Early the next day I received a curt message to the effect that my request could not be granted. This was too much, so immediately after breakfast I repaired to the quarters of the general to whom I had originally applied, and on whom, as I said before, the responsibility of seeing to the accommodation of the foreign officers chiefly lay. I told him that as my very modest request had been refused, I was now going to my tent, and that if two soldiers were not told off for my service within a quarter of an hour, I should leave headquarters and proceed to England, but that before doing so I should ask for an audience of the Emperor, which doubtless would be accorded to me, but that if His Majesty happened to be too busy to receive me, I would charge him, the general, to tell the Emperor the reason of my

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abrupt departure, namely that I found it impossible to groom five horses, clean my boots and clothes, and dine with His Majesty the same day. He implored me not to do anything of the sort, but I was obdurate, and, pointing out that two minutes of the fifteen had already elapsed, I took my departure. On reaching my tent, which was only a few yards off, I sat down and began to wonder whether I had acted wisely or not. I was not long in suspense, for within five or six minutes a non-commissioned officer appeared at the door of my tent, saying that he had been instructed to place some men at my disposal, and that they were now outside waiting for orders; and true enough, on looking out I saw twelve men drawn up in line in front of my tent. I thanked the non-commissioned officer for his trouble, and asked him to leave two men, which he did.

Of all the disagreeable ordeals which I had to endure, and they were not a few, the worst, on account of its frequency, was 'La Lecture.' As the siege of Plevna dragged its weary way, the long evenings after dinner became most monotonous, and unfortunately for me, the Emperor devised a plan for rendering them less irksome. This consisted in the reading aloud of translations into French of extracts from the leading articles of the principal foreign newspapers relating to the war. This seemed a brilliant idea, and was welcomed by every one, myself included, as an

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innovation calculated to dispel the monotony of those long tedious evenings.

The first 'Lecture,' however, completely disillusioned me, and I would have given worlds for the idea never to have been started. It was destined, however, evening after evening, and for weeks and weeks to come, completely to deprive me of any comfort or pleasure which I might otherwise have derived from my dinner, a meal which, henceforth, I looked forward to with nothing but horror. The mess marquee contained two very narrow long tables, the Emperor's place being in the centre of one of them, and that of Count Adlerberg, the Minister of the Household, immediately opposite. On either side of these two were the foreign officers, my place being usually on the left of the minister, and that of the Austrian military attaché on the right. On the first evening of 'La Lecture,' towards the end of dinner, a clerk entered the tent, and placed a large portfolio by Count Adlerberg's chair. The Emperor soon after beckoned to the Count to commence, and he, opening the portfolio, began to read extracts from articles in the German press, which were interesting enough to listen to, and so far all was well; but when the Count came to the English papers, things were very different, and I could have sunk into the ground when, in the midst of absolute silence, I had to listen to such sentences as the following:—

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'It is too late to flaunt the impudent and hypocritical pretext that the sufferings of Christians anywhere have alone moved Holy Russia to set half a million of men in motion to a career of massacre, rapine, and devastation.

'If the improvement of Christians in the abstract had been her aim, she should have commenced by ameliorating the lot of Poland.'

'Why is all that awful carnage at Plevna being wrought in the presence of the Czar, the Grand Duke, and the Roumanian Prince? We are assured that these eminent personages were gathered together on the field of action on Friday last when the conflict began, and there was especially prepared for the divine figure from the North a platform or royal box, from which to survey the opening strife, wherein two hundred thousand human creatures were to mangle and slay each other to the utmost extent possible, in the name of religion and philanthropy!'

'The Czar and his counsellors have waded so deep in the river of blood, that it is now more promising to push on through the crimson stream than to turn back for the forsaken shores of peace and justice.'

'There is nothing more shocking in all the horrors of the "Crusade" than that at the present moment fresh butcheries are being prepared—not to gain territory, for it is too late; not to

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evangelise Bulgaria, for that pretence is exploded, but to soothe the august susceptibilities of the "divine figure," and shed upon his return to the North even one solitary gleam of success from the fire of battle.'

'Tuesday was the fête-day of the Czar, and no doubt, as a delicate compliment to his patron saint, it was chosen by the Christian champion as the most fitting for the wholesale slaughter and maiming of many thousands of human beings. There is every reason to believe that the carnage was all that the most pious person could have desired. . . .

'We trust that Saint Alexander is gratified by his protégé's zeal.'

'Things have come to pass in Roumania precisely as in Servia. The "fellow-Christians" have been ruthlessly slaughtered for the gratification and ambition of the Czar; and while the Emperor of all the Russias was surveying, Xerxes-like, the field of battle from his secure and commanding "platform," the miserable dupes of his policy were being butchered wholesale for the glory of "Holy Russia."'

'The Czar will only have waded through seas of blood in order to set foot on the shores of bankruptcy.'

The faces of the audience were a study—a mixture of stupefaction at the audacity of such things

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being written about their sovereign, and of wonder as to what would be done to me as the representative of the country whose press could be guilty of such sacrilege. The possibility of hearing such things had evidently not entered into the mind of either the Emperor or his minister, and when the latter, on reaching the first objectionable passage, hesitated to continue, His Majesty, to my horror, bade him go on. I have described the effect produced on my fellow-hearers. With regard to the Emperor, after he had recovered from his first surprise, he simply smiled, and giving me a little bow after each particularly insulting passage, said, '*Je vous remercie.*' Although by degrees the occupants of the mess-tent became accustomed to hearing English views of Russian policy, and generally received them with roars of contemptuous laughter, the Emperor never forgot to acknowledge them by giving me the same little bow, as if I had penned the horrid things myself, whereas in reality I was devoutly wishing that the editors, writers, and printers of the papers producing them had never been born. My Austrian colleague did not, I am glad to say, go scot free, and to my great delight I had more than one opportunity of joining in the laughter caused by equally offensive remarks culled from Vienna newspapers.

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CHAPTER XXIII

GIURGEVO

THE original intention of the Emperor had been merely to visit and inspect his army after mobilisation, and bid them Godspeed. Circumstances, however, modified this plan to the extent that he decided to accompany his troops during the first portion of the campaign, and it was exceedingly fortunate for his country that he did so, as it soon became apparent that the Grand Duke Nicholas was not competent to take the management of such important military operations. It is not indeed too much to say that the eventual success of the campaign was entirely due to the presence of the Emperor with his army until after the fall of Plevna.

When the war commenced, it soon became apparent that a very exaggerated estimation had been formed of the military capacity of the Grand Duke Nicholas, and that although he was what may be called an excellent drill, and able to move large forces of all arms on the parade-ground, he was utterly incapable of conducting the operations of a large army in the field. His unpopularity with the army, as well as with the people, dated from this period, and was greatly increased by his

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obstinate resistance to the employment of the famous Todleben in the operations against Plevna. It will perhaps be remembered that great astonishment and much indignation were expressed when it became known at the time of the declaration of war that the great defender of Sevastopol was to have no command. These feelings were naturally intensified when, after the severe reverses sustained by the Russians before Plevna, the Grand Duke continued to oppose the general desire that Todleben, left behind at St. Petersburg, should be sent for. At last, however, he was obliged to give way, and when, after the disastrous attack of September, it was decided to invest and lay siege to Plevna, the outcry against the continued suppression of the one man capable of conducting the siege to a successful issue became so general, that it was no longer possible to ignore it, and General Todleben was summoned to the Imperial headquarters, which were then at Gorny Studen, where he arrived on September 28th, much to the delight of the whole army. The marvellous change which Todleben's presence wrought in the operations increased the unpopularity of the Grand Duke in the same ratio as it increased the general confidence in the Sevastopol hero; and when at last Plevna fell, the natural result of a regular siege, the indignation of the troops at having been needlessly hurled time after time against impregnable positions was in no way concealed. The resentment was the greater because

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the reason of the Grand Duke's antipathy to the great engineer was pretty well known. It appears that as chief of the engineer corps, of which the Grand Duke Nicholas was the Inspector-General, Todleben had put a stop to certain malpractices in the department, or, at any rate, had done all in his power to check them, and this action on his part had given umbrage to those who had derived profit from the old state of things. Then again, the troops in the front line had expected to be visited more frequently by their Commander-in-Chief, and to be occasionally encouraged under fire by his presence. When at last the war came to a conclusion—and the expenses were investigated—certain facts came to light with respect to the accounts which had not been kept as accurately as could be wished, and consequently the Grand Duke Nicholas, who, of course, as Commander-in-Chief, was responsible even for the carelessness of his subordinates, was allowed to retire into private life.

As soon as I ascertained that it was His Majesty's intention to remain with the troops, I went to Bucharest in order to purchase winter clothing and equipment for myself, servants, and horses. Having completed my purchases, I started on my return journey to the front. The usual route was by train from Bucharest to Giurgevo, a Roumanian town on the northern bank of the Danube, and thence by carriage to the bridge of boats at Simnitza, where the river was crossed. The journey from Bucharest to Giurgevo generally

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took some hours on account of the delays caused by the great number of military trains which continually blocked the line. The station of Giurgevo was in the outskirts of the town, and about a mile to the north of the Danube. Here I used to be able to hire at a moderate price one of the many conveyances which crowded the station yard on the arrival of the trains, to take me to Simnitza. Exactly opposite to Giurgevo, on the southern bank of the Danube, was Rustchuk, a Turkish fortress, still held in considerable strength by the Turks, who could always be distinctly seen walking about both inside and outside its walls.

At the commencement of the war, Giurgevo had suffered greatly by frequent bombardment from this Turkish stronghold, but the Turks had for some time left it in peace.

On the day to which I am alluding, I left Bucharest early in the morning, and Mr. Dobson, one of the correspondents of the *Times*, chanced to travel by the same train. We therefore agreed that on arrival at Giurgevo we should share a carriage from that place to the bridge of boats at Simnitza. Before reaching Giurgevo we were astonished by the train coming to a sudden standstill in the middle of a wood about a mile and a half short of the station, and we were told by an official that every one must here leave the train, as it would proceed no further. I ascertained that the reason for this was that for the last few days Rustchuk had been paying unwelcome attention

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to the trains entering Giurgevo station by firing at them as soon as they came within sight. The drivers of the conveyances which met our train in this wood thought to dictate their own terms, seeing that there was nothing else to be found at so great a distance from the town. Indeed, one man asked as much as sixty Napoleons to take me to the bridge. Mr. Dobson and I therefore resolved to get half a dozen men to carry our luggage down the line as far as the station, where we could leave it while we found a conveyance in the town at a more reasonable price. My servant Egor soon got a few men together, and having distributed our packages among them, we all started walking along the line towards the terminus, which, formerly so busy and crowded, now presented a deserted appearance, except for the presence of a small guard of Russian infantry which had established their canteen in what used to be rather a smart refreshment-room. Having superintended the piling up of the luggage under the station portico, close to one of the windows of the improvised canteen, I told Egor that we were going to fetch a carriage, and that until we arrived with it he was on no account to lose sight of our belongings. As we left the station enclosure, it struck me that we should save time if Egor got something to eat from the soldiers in the station while we went in search of a carriage. I therefore retraced my steps, and told him to get some food from the canteen, but on no account to leave the

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luggage unprotected while doing so, advising him to get one of the soldiers to stand sentry while he was having his dinner. I then rejoined my companion, and we proceeded towards the town by the long straight road leading to it from the station. We had scarcely left the yard before a shell fired from Rustchuk came screeching through the air high above our heads, and burst, as I thought, some half-mile beyond the station. It was soon followed by another and a third, which drove the inhabitants into their houses at best speed. After a hurried meal at an inn, we went to a chemist in order to lay in a provision of quinine. When we reached the shop we found the shutters up and the door only ajar. While the chemist was serving us, a small boy rushed in and said that the last of the three shells had burst in the station and killed six men. Fearful that something might have happened to my devoted Egor, we jumped into a passing carriage and drove as quickly as possible to the station. As we entered the yard, I looked in vain for my luggage in the place where I had left it, under the portico, but lying on the ground where it had been was an ominous-looking grey mass, which I feared was Egor's body. As I approached, however, I saw that it was the dead body of a Russian soldier. At that moment the door of the booking-office opened, and my servant's pale face peered out. He told me that for safety's sake he had hired two Russian soldiers to look after my luggage, and had

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placed one on each side of it, and that the first shell, which I thought had burst far beyond the station, had passed through the body of the nearest sentry, bursting in the middle of the luggage and killing his comrade on the other side. Egor had himself had a narrow escape, and was much scratched about the face by the broken glass of the window of the canteen, for he had scarcely had time to sit down close to it so as to be able to keep an eye on my things while he had his dinner, when the shell burst, shattering the window, and also wounding a Russian officer who sat opposite to him at the same table. The other poor dead sentry was lying on the floor of the booking-office. It is no exaggeration to say that there was practically nothing left of the equipment I had been to Bucharest to procure—furs, horse-cloths, halters, stove—in fact everything was blown to pieces, except, fortunately, my despatch-box which contained my money, and which only suffered the loss of a handle.

This story has a curious sequel. At the conclusion of the war, Mr. Dobson visited Rustchuk and there made acquaintance with an artillery officer, an American, in the Turkish service. As they were looking over the ramparts of the fortress towards Giurgevo, Mr. Dobson was reminded of the episode I have just related, and mentioned it to his companion, who distinctly remembered having one day seen a party of people after the arrival of the train in the wood walk down the line into the Giurgevo station. He also

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remembered having ordered his battery to fire the three shots, and that he laid the first gun himself. When they compared their notebooks, the dates were found to tally. The artilleryman further said that he was at the time very much puzzled to know who the people walking down the line could be, and what had become of them.

The mention of my servant Egor puts me in mind of the following circumstance:—Some time after I had joined the army, he asked me if he might some day go to the positions. It seemed so funny, he said, that I, a foreigner, should so often see the Russians fight, whereas he, although himself a Russian, had never seen a shot fired. One morning, therefore, during the bombardment of Plevna, I lent him a horse, and we rode out to the positions together. A fierce artillery duel was in progress, and the noise was deafening. Leaving our horses behind us, we ascended the reverse slope of a hill which sheltered us from the Turkish fire. When close to the top, I told Egor to lie down and wait till I returned. As I was anxious to see what was going on, I crept up a few yards further, still protected by the hill, in order to obtain a view. Having satisfied my curiosity, I returned to Egor, and to my utter astonishment found him fast asleep where I left him, notwithstanding the continuous roar of the guns. I must, however, confess that after his experience of shell-fire at Giurgevo railway station, he was always much more wakeful when any firing was to be heard.

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CHAPTER XXIV

ALEXANDER II.

I HAVE frequently been asked whether the Emperor Alexander II. was a kind man or the reverse, a question which always reminds me of the following anecdote with regard to Nassr-ed-Din, late Shah of Persia.

When that potentate visited Russia for the first time in 1878, I one day had occasion to see a member of his staff, an Englishman, on a matter of business, and I took that opportunity of asking him whether all that we had heard with regard to the Shah's cruel nature was true. He replied that it depended entirely from what point of view the matter was regarded. From the European point of view, he was decidedly cruel; but from the Persian point of view, he was by far the most humane sovereign the country had ever known. In illustration of this, he related how, one morning, the Shah, accompanied by his suite, among whom was my informant, rode out of one of the gates of Teheran on a hawking expedition. This gate led to the execution-ground, riding across which the cavalcade came upon an unfortunate criminal who had just been impaled. After

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his day's sport, the Shah and his followers returned to the city by the same gate, and observing as he passed that the impaled man was still alive, His Majesty drew his sword and killed him with his own hand. From the Persian point of view this was an act of kindness, but in civilised eyes it seems a deed of cruelty. Although I do not, of course, for one moment wish to compare the Emperor Alexander II. with the Shah of that day, it is necessary before answering a question as to his character to know whether it is to be judged according to Western or Eastern ideas. Alexander II. was unquestionably the most kind-hearted and liberal-minded sovereign that ever occupied the Russian throne, as evidenced by the emancipation of the serfs and various other measures of a liberal tendency, but at the same time he would undoubtedly be regarded in Western Europe as an unbending autocrat, and he frequently treated his subjects, both high and low, in a manner which no constitutional sovereign would either wish or dare to adopt. The mention of this Shah of Persia reminds me of two or three anecdotes concerning him which I think may be worth relating.

When he arrived at St. Petersburg in 1873, he brought with him a beautiful chestnut horse which he presented with much pomp to the Tsesarevna, the sister of our present Queen. When he sent it to her stables he insisted that it should be accompanied by a Persian groom,

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with a view, as he said, of instructing her grooms as to how it should be fed, etc. On the morning of the Shah's departure for Berlin, the Tsesarevna's English coachman chanced to enter the horse's loose-box, and to his great surprise found it empty. A speedy search for the Persian groom proving fruitless, the coachman at once guessed what had occurred, and galloped off without a moment's delay to the railway station. He was not a minute too soon, for the train was already made up and waiting to convey his Persian Majesty to the German frontier. The coachman's suspicions were soon confirmed, for attached to the end of the train was a horse-box, in which the horse and his Persian attendant were both comfortably installed. It transpired that it had been the Shah's intention to present this horse as a gift at every European court he proposed to visit, and the animal would doubtless have returned with His Majesty to Teheran had not the English coachman above referred to discovered the arrangement in time to frustrate it. He got the stationmaster to uncouple the horse-box, and when the train steamed out of the station it left the circulating presentation-horse behind. The Persian groom was sent on to Berlin the following day, and one shudders to think what may have happened to him in consequence of his having failed to carry out his master's instructions. The above story was told me by the Tsesarevitch's Master of the Horse as well as by the coachman.

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After visiting Berlin the Shah proceeded to Vienna, and while there ordered from the court coachbuilder a magnificent State carriage of gold and glass. As, however, he failed to pay for it when ready, the coachbuilder declined to deliver it at Teheran. This gorgeous carriage, therefore, did not become His Majesty's property till, on his return to Vienna a few years later, he paid for it. As he was most anxious to try his new acquisition at once, he asked the Emperor to give orders that eight of the Imperial horses should be harnessed to it, and that the carriage, with its attendants, should be made ready for him. The Emperor good-naturedly acceded to this request, and accordingly the State carriage appeared at the Shah's door at the appointed hour. The Austrian court being in mourning at the time, the grooms wore their mourning livery. This did not at all suit the Shah who, having visited the Imperial stables, had not failed to notice the magnificent State liveries which are there displayed in glass cases. He was determined not to be done. In vain did the officials explain to him that the court was in mourning. A fresh appeal had to be made to the Emperor, who then ordered the gala State liveries to be produced. This took time, but eventually the Shah was able to take his first drive in his golden carriage. As the servants were about to get up behind he stopped them, saying, through his interpreter, that no one except himself should

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ever occupy any portion of the coach. He then proceeded to spend the rest of the day driving backwards and forwards in this cumbrous conveyance between the old town and the Danube. I was in Vienna myself at the time, and was a witness of this peculiar spectacle.

During the same visit to Vienna the Shah, having heard that the mode of execution of those condemned to death in the dual monarchy was by hanging, begged the Emperor to allow him to be present at an execution. His Majesty replied that although he was sorry to be unable to gratify the Shah's wish, he could not but be pleased that there was no one at that time under sentence of death in his dominions. To get over this difficulty, the importance of which the Shah was apparently unable to grasp, he suggested one of his own suite as a victim, and when this offer was declined said, 'If you will only hang somebody, and allow me to be present at the execution, I will, on my return to Persia, send you a man that you can do anything you like with.' The above story was told me by an official of very high rank at the Austrian court, who was present when this conversation took place between the two sovereigns through the medium of an interpreter.

After this digression I must return to the Emperor Alexander II., whose character was under discussion. The following are a few instances of his kindness of heart.

While at Simnitza in the month of July he

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showed the interest he took in his soldiers by the constant visits he paid to a neighbouring field hospital, which was, of course, always in excellent order on that account. The convalescent patients, as they lay in their neat little beds shaded by the trees of the hospital garden, and attended by their picturesquely attired nurses, many of whom were ladies from St. Petersburg and Moscow, looked as happy and comfortable as possible. There was one patient who attracted general interest. He had on the day of the crossing of the Danube been in one of the pontoons which the Turks had succeeded in sinking, but had managed to reach the southern bank of the river in spite of the five bullet-wounds he had received about the neck and shoulders. He lay on the bank without food for four whole days, and it was not until the fifth that he was accidentally found by some comrades who happened to be strolling along the river bank. Although exhausted from loss of blood and want of proper nourishment, he had managed to keep himself alive by drinking water from the Danube, having had just sufficient strength to enable him to roll himself down to the water's edge and back again. When he was found his wounds were in a terrible state, as may be imagined, considering the tropical heat which then prevailed. When brought into hospital he was more dead than alive, and the surgeons had no hope of his recovery. Day by day, however, his condition improved, and I was present when, after he was declared convalescent, the Emperor with his own

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hand pinned the Cross of St. George on to his shirt as he lay in his bed in the garden. The poor fellow did not live long to enjoy this much-envied military decoration, for a very few days after he received it there was a sudden collapse and he died.

On his return from one of his visits to this hospital the Emperor told me, as a great joke, that one of the soldiers who also had been wounded during the passage of the Danube had boasted to him that, before being hit, he had succeeded in killing six Turks, one of whom was an Englishman!

A few days later I had another opportunity of witnessing an act of personal kindness on the part of His Majesty, but this time it was towards some of the enemy. A number of Turks and their families had been made prisoners. They were chiefly peasants, but it was feared that they might, if opportunity arose, do harm to their Christian fellow-subjects. They were in camp not far from headquarters, in a circular zareba formed by their wagons, and were in charge of a Russian escort. One evening after dinner the Emperor suggested paying them a visit, and, accompanied by his staff, proceeded on foot to their camp. On our approach the prisoners, who had been strolling about, immediately took refuge behind their wagons, fearing, no doubt, that our presence boded no good to them. By degrees, but not without much persuasion, they were induced to show themselves, the women closely veiled, of course. The Emperor, after having

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said a few kind and reassuring words through an interpreter, offered some of them cigarettes out of his own case, which was, of course, the signal for all the staff to do the same, and as it was a very numerous one, consisting perhaps of some two hundred officers, the poor prisoners obtained a plentiful supply of tobacco.

The following is another instance of His Majesty's consideration. On the 4th of July, at Simnitza, we were all at dinner when the funeral of a young military officer, who had been drowned during the crossing of the Danube, and whose body had been recovered four miles down the river, was heard passing along the road. The Emperor at once rose from the table, and, followed by us all, proceeded to a little old church close by where the burial service took place. After the ceremony the Emperor, having heard that the cap and sword belonging to the young officer had been found upon him, ordered that they should be sent to his mother.

I have elsewhere said that the Emperor's presence in Bulgaria was essential to the success of the war.

Roughly speaking, the Russian plan of campaign was to form an avenue of two armies from the Danube southwards, between which the third and principal army, with both its flanks thus protected, would march on Constantinople. Had these combinations been successful, and had the Turks shown as little resistance to the Russian advance as they

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did when the Danube was crossed, and Biela abandoned without a shot being fired, the Grand Duke Nicholas would very likely have been capable of carrying such a comparatively speaking simple operation to a successful issue. But things did not go so smoothly, and Osman Pasha had, unexpectedly, to be reckoned with. His obstinate defence of Plevna entirely upset all the Russian calculations, and this it was which showed the Grand Duke in his true light, and as being quite incapable of making up his mind how to act for the best when placed in a position of threatening difficulty.

The same circumstances showed his elder brother, the Emperor, to be a very different man. I do not mean that he was a Napoleon, nor had he himself ever any pretensions to being considered a great soldier. He certainly, however, showed that he was a man of calm intelligence and shrewd common sense. He therefore was able to decide between many conflicting opinions, and, having made up his mind as to the right course, to insist upon his decision being carried out.

That he did not lose his head in an emergency is shown by the following anecdote related to me by a foreign officer who was present. The event took place while His Majesty and staff were moving their quarters from Simnitza to Pavlo, a village some few miles south of the Danube. I much regret that I happened to be absent on that day.

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After crossing the river the Imperial headquarters had not proceeded far when, all of a sudden, a mounted messenger galloped up in a state of great excitement with a note from the telegraphist at the Sistova or southern end of the bridge, saying that the Turks were coming, and that, having waited till the last moment, he was about to close the office and escape. Although such a sudden raid on the part of the Turks was not probable, it was sufficiently possible to cause a feeling of great anxiety for the Emperor's personal safety among the officers who accompanied him, especially as the principal portion of the escort, infantry as well as cavalry, had been sent considerable distances to the front and flanks, and the rear, which was thus threatened, had only such protection as a few mounted men and the staff itself could afford. There was therefore great consternation among the officers, but the Emperor on hearing the news quietly dismounted, and, after a few moments of reflection, gave instructions to different aides-de-camp to call in the scattered portions of the escort, resolved to make as determined a stand against the enemy as possible. The only sign of anxiety which His Majesty displayed was a nervous tapping of his boot with his sword as he gave his orders. After a prolonged period of suspense, intelligence arrived that the telegraphist, terrified by some wild rumour that had reached him, had lost his head, sent the message to the Emperor, and bolted. The very

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possibility that he, the Emperor of all the Russias, might become a prisoner in the hands of the Sultan, and the mere thought of what the appalling results of such a catastrophe would be, were sufficient to unnerve many a man placed in such a position, but in this case the impending danger served to show that the Emperor was equal to the occasion.

Before leaving the subject of the Emperor Alexander II. I must relate the following details concerning his death which were related to me by Prince Michael Dolgorouki, whose sister the Emperor married morganatically after the death of the Empress. The tragic event occurred on a Sunday morning, and curiously enough at the very time when Prince Dolgorouki was visiting a high official who had been deputed by the Emperor to ascertain from the Prince the amount of his pecuniary liabilities, with a view to their being liquidated from Imperial funds. The official in question had scarcely had time to assure the Prince that he might count on his debts being paid by the Emperor, when a loud report was heard, followed almost immediately by a second. On the Prince expressing alarm at the noise, the official reassured him by saying that it was probably only the artillery practising, as they frequently did on Sundays. When Prince Dolgorouki reached the street he found people rushing about saying that there had been an attempt on the Emperor's life. Hailing the first passing conveyance, he hurried

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to the Winter Palace, where all was confusion—so much so that no one stopped him or asked what his business might be. The doors of the Palace were open, the hall was filled with people, and along the corridors persons in an excited state were hurrying to and fro. The floor of the great hall was stained with blood, and following this ghastly track, the Prince ascended the staircase and reached the room in which his murdered sovereign lay. By his side knelt the Prince's sister—the sole other occupant of the room, and it was some time before the court officials recovered themselves sufficiently to encroach on this melancholy scene.

To descend to a minor topic: notwithstanding the murdered Emperor's desire and promise to meet Prince Dolgorouki's financial obligations, his successor to the throne absolutely declined to carry out his father's intentions.

I was myself in Paris in 1867 when an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of this unfortunate sovereign. It was the year of the great Exhibition, when Napoleon III. received most of the crowned heads of Europe and their principal ministers in his capital. On a splendid June day a grand review was held at Longchamps in honour of the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia. Sixty thousand men, the flower of the French army, were there assembled, and I never saw a finer military display—even in Russia.

The royalties drove from Paris in carriages,

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and did not mount their chargers until they reached the Bois de Boulogne. The first carriage contained the King of Prussia with the Empress Eugénie, and in the next were the Emperor Napoleon, accompanied by the Emperor Alexander and his two sons. I was honoured with an invitation, and also drove to the Bois with the late Lord Edward Thynne, who had likewise been invited. We there found our horses, and joined the staff of the Emperor, who, with those who accompanied him, had already mounted.

The Empress with her suite had driven on and occupied the Imperial tribune on the Longchamps racecourse.

After inspecting the lines of troops—which were under the command of Marshal Canrobert, —their Majesties took up their position on the saluting base for the march past. There was a great deal of cheering, but the ominous cry of '*Vive la Pologne!*' was heard more than once from the crowd.

At the conclusion of the review, which had been a great success, the royalties resumed their places in the carriages and started on their return to Paris.

Meanwhile, in order to evade the crowd, my companion and myself had dismounted a little before the end of the review, and getting into our brougham that was waiting, proceeded homewards along the quiet alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, as I had told the coachman to avoid the route prescribed for the Imperial procession.

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We had scarcely had time to take off our swords and make ourselves comfortable, when I suddenly heard a noise like that of a charge of cavalry behind us, and, looking out, saw the head of the Emperor's escort of Cent Gardes approaching at full gallop. I had just time to tell the coachman to pull out of the road, when it dashed past followed by the Imperial carriages and the remainder of the escort. It was not till we reached Paris that we heard what had happened to cause the change of route of the Imperial carriages, and to account for the speed at which they passed us.

It appeared that the Emperor's carriage had barely reached the cascade in the Bois, when a young Pole named Beregoffski, emerging from the crowd, deliberately fired two shots from a pistol at the Russian Emperor. Napoleon's equerry, M. Raimbaud, seeing the man raise his hand, endeavoured to force his horse between the assassin and the Emperor, and consequently the bullet went through the animal's nostril, thereby bespattering the occupants of the carriage with blood. Beregoffski missed his aim, but I think a poor woman in the crowd was wounded by his bullet.

It was stated at the time that Napoleon, immediately after the attempt, turned to the Emperor of Russia and said, 'Sire, we have been under fire together,' to which the latter replied, 'Our destinies are in the hands of God.'

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CHAPTER XXV

INEFFECTUAL BOMBARDMENT OF PLEVNA

We had known for some time that an assault on Plevna was soon to be delivered, but the actual day was naturally enough kept a secret even from the Imperial staff. On the afternoon, however, of the 6th September, we were officially informed that the Imperial headquarters, which were then at Poredin, would move in the course of the evening. There was no longer any doubt that the attack was to be made on the following morning.

The Emperor and his staff started at about ten P.M. in the direction of Plevna in the midst of a warm, drizzling rain. At early morning we reached a small field telegraph station about fifteen miles from the positions in front of Plevna, and we here found the Grand Duke Nicholas awaiting the Emperor's arrival. We all dismounted, and His Majesty had a long conversation with the Grand Duke and others inside the little station, and telegraphic communications were evidently for some time active between them and the positions.

About five A.M. we heard the bombardment commence notwithstanding the distance which

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still separated us from the lines, and the booming of the guns was heard incessantly from that moment. After a delay of nearly two hours we continued our march and reached some elevated ground, from which the famous Grivitza redoubt and other Turkish works were seen on our right front, and below us to the left were the lines of the Russian batteries. This was at about ten A.M.

The original idea was that the bombardment should commence at five A.M., and be continued without intermission until eleven A.M., when it was anticipated that sufficient breaches would be made in the Turkish works to admit of a general assault being delivered. When, however, the hour of attack came it was recognised that the practical effect of the bombardment had been *nil*, and it was consequently decided to postpone the attack, at any rate for the present.

Much was said at the time, both in England and elsewhere, with regard to a 'grand stand' having been erected out of range of the Turkish fire, from which the Emperor could, without danger, witness what it was hoped would be the capture of Osman Pasha's fortress. There was no grand stand in the usual acceptation of the term, but a small wooden platform with a railing round it, and capable of holding about fifty persons, had certainly been erected for the Emperor's use. Many disagreeable remarks were also made with regard to the preparation of a great luncheon

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near the stand for the Emperor and his staff after witnessing the assault from this place of safety. It cannot be denied that the luncheon-table was there, with its display of white table-cloths, knives, forks, champagne, etc., close to the little stand, and I could not but think that the whole scene would have been more in keeping with a small provincial race-meeting than with a great field of military operations of so momentous a character.

We had all been watching from this hill a most interesting artillery duel, which had been going on ever since our arrival, between the Turks in the Grivitza redoubt and a Russian siege-battery of twelve guns placed on a hillock to our left front beyond the valley which lay at our feet. As far as we could judge from where we were, most of the Turkish shells burst inside the Russian battery, which replied apparently with nearly equal success.

It having been decided that the grand attack should not take place that morning, I asked the Emperor's leave to absent myself from his staff, as I much wished to be free to go where I would. His Majesty replied good-naturedly, 'You may go where you like, as long as you don't get shot.' I found a companion in the person of Colonel Catargi of the Roumanian army, and we rode down into the valley with the intention of visiting the Russian siege-battery to which I have just referred. A ride of about half an hour took us

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down the hill and across the valley to a little rising ground, in rear of which we found a body of infantry, the escort for the guns, lying under shelter.

Leaving our horses in their charge, we ran across a piece of open ground into the battery, where we were most courteously received by the officer commanding it, who immediately begged us to stand close up to the guns for greater safety. Here I had an opportunity of asking him what his losses had been, and to my intense astonishment he replied that notwithstanding the good practice made by the Turks he had not lost a man, nor had a gun been scratched. He held a book in his hand in which he registered the number and effect of each Turkish shell, and he pointed out that the last shell was the thirty-fifth that had burst inside his battery up to that moment. While we were there five more shells fell and burst right in the battery and to our rear, but no damage was done. The fact was that the parapets of the battery being enormously high, the trajectory of the Turkish fire was so curved that the projectiles plunged straight down into the ground, which, fortunately for all of us, was extremely soft, and buried themselves there, bursting upwards in the line of least resistance, instead of laterally, which would of course have wrought great havoc. I subsequently heard that in spite of the continuance of the Turkish fire for some time after we left, absolutely no damage

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had been done to that particular battery during the whole of the day.

On leaving the battery Colonel Catargi and I parted company, he going in one direction and I in another. Towards dusk, both myself and my horse being somewhat exhausted, which was not to be wondered at, considering that we had been on the move since ten o'clock on the evening before, I began to think as to where I should bivouac, and, quite by chance, eventually came upon the headquarters of the Ninth Army Corps, where I met my old friend General Krüdener, who commanded it. He received me with his accustomed good-nature, and assuming, I suppose, from my famished appearance, that I was in need of sustenance, offered me all that he had to give, some tea and black bread, which I accepted with gratitude. It was now getting dark. Round the foot of a tree close by lay the different members of the general's staff, and near them was a small cart filled with hay, which served their aged chief as a bed. In the rear, the horses of his escort of Cossacks were picketed. The general's servant took my horse, promising to see it properly fed and watered. Having finished my frugal meal, I was glad to lie down on a heap of hay, and soon fell fast asleep. The little open space occupied by General Krüdener and his staff was on elevated ground, sloping gradually down to the valley in which the village of Plevna lay. About eleven at night I was awakened by the sound of

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brisk infantry fire coming from the valley below. Peering down into the darkness, I could see the flashes from the rifles of two distinct lines of infantry firing at one another. The line nearest to me, and therefore of course the Russian, was not so long as that opposed to it, and appeared in the darkness to be outflanked on both sides. Nearer they came and nearer, and it seemed as if in a few moments the Turks, driving the Russians before them, would advance over the very spot occupied by Krüdener's headquarters. Meanwhile the general, having despatched his aides-de-camp in different directions to bring up his troops, had mounted and disappeared with the remainder of his staff and his Cossack escort.

I learned on this occasion how unwise it is when campaigning to hand one's horse over to the tender care of a stranger, for my animal was nowhere to be found, and the night being extremely dark, it appeared useless even to hunt for it. There was nothing, therefore, to be done but to watch the infantry engaged in the valley below, and to join, if necessary, the Russians in their retreat.

All at once, however, and as suddenly and as unexpectedly as it had commenced, the firing ceased. By good luck I heard the neighing of my horse, and walking in the direction whence the sound came, I was fortunate enough to blunder up against it tied to a tree; and so dark

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was the night that I could only be sure of its being my horse by the feel of the bearskin holsters attached to the saddle, which lay on the ground close by. Having secured my animal, I went back to my heap of hay, and after having tied the end of the halter to my wrist, fell fast asleep again. Before long the general and his staff returned, but none of them said anything to me as to what had occurred.

Before daylight there was a repetition of the firing in the valley, and again old Krüdener disappeared with his staff and escort. This time the firing did not last so long, and appeared to be further off. The next time I saw the general, whom I did not, of course, like to bother with questions at the time, I asked him what the firing had been, and his answer, which was most evasive, seems now to confirm what I subsequently heard from an undoubtedly good authority, that there had been a panic in the Russian lines, caused by the accidental discharge of a rifle, which had led to two lines of Russians firing into each other, the result being a great loss of life.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT ATTACK ON PLEVNA

On the 30th of August, Prince Charles of Roumania had been appointed to the command of the combined Russian and Roumanian armies before Plevna, with General Zotoff of the Russian service as Chief of the Staff.

Knowing that the great attack on Osman Pasha's fortress was to take place on the 11th September, the fifth day of the bombardment, an attack on the success or failure of which so much depended, I rode with Archibald Forbes on the 10th to the positions outside Plevna, in order that we might judge as to which was the most suitable spot from which to watch the battle on the following day.

Just as we were starting very early in the morning, a native cart drove slowly up to my hut, and in it, to my astonishment and dismay, lay my friend Mr. Grant, the *Times* correspondent, looking as if he had but a few hours to live. At first I thought that he had been wounded, but soon ascertained that he was suffering from a very severe attack of jaundice. He was broken-hearted at the idea of his first chance of reporting a big

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battle to his employers being thus lost to him. Fully understanding what his grief must be, especially as no other representative of his paper was available, I did my best to console him by saying that I would write a description of the battle for him to the best of my ability, and send it to him at Bucharest, whither he promised to return next day. Meanwhile I told my servant to prepare my room for him and look after him as best he could until his departure. Having given poor Grant such comfort as an underground Bulgarian hut could afford to a man so ill as he was, and who died not long afterwards, I caught up Forbes, who had already started. As we approached the positions a desultory sort of fire was going on between the Turkish and Russian works.

When near the latter we dismounted, and leaving our horses behind us, walked up the reverse slope of one of the many hills commanding Plevna, from the summit of which we obtained an excellent view of the Russian and Turkish positions.

Standing under a mulberry-tree on the heights of Radisovo, we could see on our left front, at a distance of not more than a thousand yards, a large Turkish redoubt on the summit of a hill with a natural sloping glacis descending to a ragged open ravine encircling its base, and capable of holding large bodies of troops. This ravine lay at our feet. From the same work a road led down

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into the valley on our right front, in which was the little village of Plevna.

Having, after long consideration, made up our minds that no other place was likely to be of so much interest on the following day as the one where we stood, we rode home satisfied with the choice we had made.

Arrived at headquarters we parted, after arranging to ride to the positions together at five o'clock the following morning. Punctually at that hour Forbes called at my hut, and we rode silently towards the positions, pondering the while as to what the day which was then dawning would bring forth.

The village of Plevna lies, roughly speaking, at the southern extremity of a horse-shoe of hills, the toe of the shoe pointing northwards, and numerous small transverse ravines run from the top of these hills down into the valley below.

The Turks not having sufficient troops to hold the summit of all the hills forming the horse-shoe, had to content themselves with holding the western and northern heights.

Bulgaria at that time of the year is as much subject to fogs as London in November, and when on the morning of the 11th Mr. Forbes and I reached our mulberry-tree a dense fog lay over the valley, so dense that not a single Turkish work, nor the village nor any part of the Turkish positions, could be distinguished.

Near a hayrick close by were two or three other

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war correspondents, including Mr. M'Gahan, Forbes's American colleague on the *Daily News*.

According to the original orders, the general attack was to commence at eleven A.M., but, owing to the fog, operations in our portion of the field were absolutely impossible, and it was necessary to wait until it lifted. Meanwhile firing could be heard more or less on all sides, especially in the direction of Skobeleff, but we could see nothing, nor could we ascertain from any one what was taking place. This was most exasperating, for we naturally felt that fighting of great importance was going on, which we, though so near, were unable to witness. The darkness continued until the afternoon, and then suddenly, and in a manner resembling the rising of shadowy clouds before the transformation scene in a pantomime, the vapours began to rise slowly and in dense masses, gradually unveiling to our sight the Turkish works and shelter trenches, silent and apparently unoccupied.

I shall never forget the awful solemnity of that moment, and as the mists slowly rose, one was irresistibly impressed with the idea that the hour fatal to Plevna had arrived, and that at last the veil which had all that day saved it from its enemies was now treacherously abandoning it to its fate.

In shelter trenches to our rear lay lines of infantry in their white fighting dress, with rifles firmly gripped ; and the anxious look on the faces

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of one and all of these men, the majority of whom were quite young, showed the effect this long delay had had on their nerves. Every countenance was grave, but without the slightest trace of fear.

The inward nervous excitement of us all was, of course, intense, and now that the fog had completely cleared away, and the sun was shining on the doomed little village below, the word to advance was momentarily expected.

In vain did one look towards Plevna and its defences for any sign of life or activity among the Turks. There on the hills stood the great, brown, frowning redoubts, which had cost Osman Pasha so much labour to erect. There they stood in their massive ugliness, as it were defying our approach, but not a living creature of any sort was to be seen, and one was almost tempted to think that, knowing his time had come, Osman Pasha had found some means of evacuating his stronghold undetected.

As minutes, half-hours, and hours flew by, the excitement became more and more intense, and we at last began to wonder whether after all the attack was going to be again postponed.

At about three o'clock, however, unusual activity was observable among the Russian troops. Here and there an aide-de-camp would be seen galloping away to deliver some message intrusted to him, and signs were not wanting to show that the word for a general advance would soon be given.

As to Forbes and myself, we occupied both our

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time and our minds during this trying interval by taking notes under an awning which we had improvised in a Russian battery by propping up a greatcoat to protect us, or rather the paper of our note-books, from a fine drizzling rain which had fallen intermittently all day.

At last, at 3.30 P.M., a brigade of Russian infantry appeared on rising ground to our left, and, rushing down the hill, occupied the ravine which I before mentioned as lying at our feet and encircling the base of the hill on the top of which was the great Turkish redoubt.

Here at last was a proof that the attack was about to commence. More and more troops poured into the ravine, and punctually at four o'clock the word to advance was given. The object of this particular attack was of course the redoubt which I have mentioned as standing on the summit of the natural glacis, lying between it and the ravine.

Even now this great, black, ominous-looking work appeared deserted, nor was any living being to be seen anywhere near it.

Although the order to attack had gone forth, the infantry in the ravine, perhaps not understanding exactly to whom it referred, seemed to hang back for a time. A moment or two later, first one, then two, then more officers were seen to spring on to the glacis. They were rapidly followed by their men, not in any particular formation, but like a swarm of bees, and all then

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rushed headlong together towards the object of their attack. Silent and dead as the Turkish works had appeared to be, now of a sudden a terrific fire was poured on the attackers from successive lines of shelter trenches by which the glacis was intercepted between the ravine and the redoubt on the hill-top.

These shelter trenches had been absolutely unobserved and unobservable until this withering fire opened from one trench after another on the advancing Russians, whose losses were terrific. Notwithstanding, they rushed gallantly over some three or four lines of trenches, until, coming within a moderate distance of the redoubt, they were suddenly checked by the most murderous fire of infantry and guns, the latter belching out grape and canister without cessation. The Turks had reserved their fire from the works until almost the last moment, and as the Russians reached the parapets, the whole redoubt appeared to be ablaze from the flashing of the guns and rifles, the smoke from which rose in a dense damp column to the sky.

At this moment a regiment of infantry was seen advancing quietly from the village of Plevna up the road, which I before described as leading from it to the redoubt above. So quietly and orderly was this advance that Forbes, who was standing by my side, exclaimed, 'Great heavens! Plevna is taken. The Russians have evidently got in from the other side, and that column of men

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which we see yonder are marching up to join in the attack on the redoubt!'

As he was uttering these words, however, I saw through my glasses that the men wore fezes, and hardly had time to say, 'No, they are Turks, I see their fezes,' when the column halted, and fronting towards us, poured a deadly volley into the right flank of the advancing Russians and, having done so, quietly marched on to the redoubt, which they had scarcely entered when the fire from the parapets seemed to be more than doubled by their arrival.

Presently a Russian was seen to turn and retire, then another and yet another, till at last, in almost less time than it takes me to write it, the whole of the attacking troops turned and fled.

It is really no disparagement to the Russian soldier, nor any reflection on his courage, that such should have been the case. Their rushing the three or four lines of Turkish shelter trenches was sufficient proof that they were not wanting in dash, but when it comes nowadays to making frontal attacks on entrenched positions, without the assistance of simultaneous turning movements, if there is failure, the fault lies not with the men, but with the commanders.

It is difficult to describe the impression created in one's mind by the frightful slaughter which attended this attack, and one could scarcely believe that the bodies covering the ground were those of killed and wounded human beings.

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This attack was followed at an interval of about twenty minutes by another delivered from our left, and with a similar result; but, not content with two defeats of so crushing a nature, a third attack was made from the same side as the second, but in so half-hearted a manner that it seemed scarcely even intended to succeed.

Everything was now over, and as we mounted our horses to ride away, a glance back towards the scene of that deadly fight revealed the Turks leaping over the parapets, with their swords shining in the setting sun, with the evident purpose of killing the wounded. This sickening sight was rendered the more terrible on account of the utter impossibility of doing anything to prevent such cruel deeds.

On the 11th of the following December, the day after the fall of Plevna, when we entered that village, as described in a subsequent chapter, for the purpose of holding a *Te Deum* in honour of its capture, I saw the skeletons of the men who fell during this attack still unburied, and scantily covered by fragments of uniform, from some of which the buttons were still hanging.

As we rode back to headquarters, we learned that the attack in general had been as unsuccessful as that portion of it of which we had ourselves been witnesses. We also heard that a desperate assault had been made in the afternoon on the Grivitza redoubt by the Russians and Roumanians, but that the united forces had failed to capture it.

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This, however, was only partially true, inasmuch as after two failures they had eventually, late in the evening, succeeded in seizing the work.

That night I sat up till four A.M. writing many columns for the *Times*. Another correspondent was going post-haste to Bucharest to despatch his own message, and to him I intrusted my MSS., which he promised to deliver to Grant the very moment he reached the Roumanian capital. Poor Grant, however, who, although desperately ill, was anxiously awaiting the fulfilment of my promise, received my account of the battle too late, and sent to him in such a form that he was unable to make use of it. Such is rivalry in journalism.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE NEXT DAY

On the following morning, being desirous of visiting this famous Grivitza redoubt, more especially as it was the first Turkish fort which the Russians had hitherto been able to capture at Plevna, I rode early to the positions, and made my way across one of the valleys towards the work, above which a flagstaff was now defiantly displaying the Roumanian flag. Having crossed the valley, I found myself at the foot of a hill where a small army (Russians and Roumanians), consisting of infantry and artillery, were drawn up in line of columns. The hill stood between this little force and a Turkish entrenched camp, thus protecting the former from fire coming from that direction. Suddenly I heard my name called, and turning round recognised the colonel of an infantry regiment whom I had not seen since he entertained the Duke of Edinburgh some years before at a camp near Moscow. Knowing that I came from headquarters, he probably thought that I should be more or less behind the scenes with regard to projected movements, and asked me if I could tell him what the troops, of which his regiment

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formed part, were about to undertake. I told him that I really had no absolute information, but that I had been told that an attack was in contemplation on the entrenched Turkish camp which lay about two miles to his front. He asked me where I was going, and I replied that as I had heard that the Grivitza redoubt had been captured, I was about to visit it. He then advised me to dismount and to take advantage of a deep ditch, the position of which he indicated, as it would take me under cover a certain distance in the direction of the redoubt, adding that the Turks were firing shrapnel from the entrenched camp at any one attempting to approach the redoubt, as they were evidently determined that it should neither be re-victualled nor reinforced, and that only half an hour before, one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp had been shot while entering it. I had previously been joined by Mr. Frederick Villiers, the well-known war correspondent of the *Graphic*, as well as by Mr. Rose, the representative of the *Scotsman*.

Taking the advice that had been given us, we dismounted and made use of what protection was afforded by the ditch as far as it would take us. The ditch itself was crammed with Roumanian infantry, many of whom tried to dissuade us from proceeding, but for what reason, being ignorant of their language, I was unable to understand.

On arriving at the end of the ditch, we climbed out on to the glacis of the work, and there found

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ourselves on a gentle slope leading up to the redoubt, and so covered with dead and wounded that we had literally to pick our way so as to avoid touching them.

We had not proceeded far before bullets began to whiz past and to strike the ground around us, which showed that we were attracting fire from somewhere. Looking to the left, whence, according to the Russian colonel, we might expect to be greeted with shrapnel, all was quiet, and in front was the great redoubt then occupied by the allies, so that we were at a loss to know from what quarter this shower of bullets came. The fire became so hot that I decided to make a rush for the redoubt. Half-way up the glacis we came on a little breastwork under shelter of which we lay down in order to get breath before making our final dash into the work. Meanwhile the bullets were pouring all round us and thudding into the breastwork behind our heads. Although we were really quite safe where we were, the situation became so uncomfortable that we decided to jump up and make our rush. Some Roumanian officers squatting in the entrance of the redoubt shouted to us to bend low and run in their direction. This we did, and were more than thankful when we reached them, and they pulled us to the ground beside them for security against the continuous shower of lead coming from, to me, an unknown direction. I had now time to look about me and examine the work. It had a

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ditch round it, and the parapets were high and thick. The only entrance, curiously enough, was a narrow opening facing to the south, it having been originally constructed for defence against attack from the north. Just inside this opening was a high traverse. Presently I asked leave to enter the redoubt, which was granted, with the advice to make a bolt of it round the traverse, as there was a dangerous corner to pass. This I did, and pray that I may be spared from ever again witnessing the sight which then met my eyes. The interior of this great work was piled up with dead and dying, forming one ghastly, indistinguishable, seething mass of dead and living, the wounded being as little heeded as the dead. I was vividly reminded of this sickening sight when I read a description of the interior of the building in which the remnants of Lotter's commando took refuge when so ably surrounded and captured by Scobell in South Africa in 1901. It was indeed heartrending to see the feeble endeavours of some of the still living to extricate themselves from the weight of the bodies of their dead comrades above them, and their frantic efforts to get an arm, or head, or leg, free from the mass. The Turkish fire had hindered the doctors from coming up to attend to the wounded, and the same cause had kept back the stretcher-bearers. There were not even comrades to moisten the lips of their wretched fellow-soldiers or give them a word of consolation. Some

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attempt should surely have been made, at whatever risk, to aid these poor creatures, for they were the gallant men who, twenty-four hours before and in tropical heat, had so valiantly and successfully struggled for the conquest of that long uncaptured redoubt. It was sad indeed to see them now dying without any attempt being made either to attend to their wounds, or to give them food and water. I could fill pages with a description of this harrowing scene and others near it which I witnessed that day, but the task would be a disagreeable one. When I mentioned the matter to a Roumanian officer, he explained that the doctors were obliged to take cases in the order of their occurrence, and as the Roumanians had suffered not a little two days before, the surgeons were still engaged in attending upon those early cases. Anyhow, the fact remains that these poor people had received neither food, water, nor medical aid since the capture of the fort on the previous day. To give an idea of the actual state of things, there was not even a pathway between the bodies of the dead and wounded on which to walk, and in order to avoid exposing my head above the parapets on my way to the far end of the work I had to crawl on my hands and knees, taking care to place them on the rifles and swords beneath me instead of on the bodies of the poor wounded. The stench, it is needless to say, was overpowering. On reaching the extremity of the redoubt in this grim manner, I

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took off my forage-cap and peered over, and there within a few hundred yards I saw in front of me another Turkish work with a line of rifles bristling on the parapet.

The fire did not diminish as we returned from the redoubt down the glacis towards the village of Grivitza, and Mr. Rose was struck by a bullet on the ankle just as he reached our protecting ditch. We rested a little behind the hill with the Russian and Roumanian columns, and then pushed on in order to see what progress had been made towards the Turkish entrenched camp. Suddenly the Turks commenced to search most thoroughly with shrapnel the reverse slope of the hill where the reserves were lying, and compelled them to change their positions. The skirmishing line was also obliged to retire. Since by this time it was six P.M., I knew that the attack had been abandoned for that day, and therefore returned to quarters.

The following morning, when riding near the village of Grivitza, I came to a long avenue of large hospital marquees. They had evidently been pitched to supply the demand which was naturally anticipated as the result of the great attack, for I had not seen them before. As I entered the avenue, I perceived on the right two or three smaller tents in which Russian surgeons were playing cards and drinking. I entered several of the hospital marquees. A few were empty, others were filled, or partially filled, with

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Russian wounded of the previous days, lying on the straw which was placed around the interior. While I was in one of these tents several men staggered in, weak from their wounds, and who had evidently expended all their strength in reaching this inhospitable refuge. I say inhospitable, because the Russian surgeons before alluded to appeared to think gambling and drinking of more importance than attention to these wretched creatures who were coming in by driblets from the surrounding country. It was indeed sad to see these brave young Russian soldiers in their white uniforms stained with blood, subjected to this neglect, and when I heard them helplessly groaning, I could not but hope that some one in authority would pass that way and treat those Russian surgeons as they deserved.

A few days later I resolved to return to headquarters, and starting at daylight on a sturdy cob, I was astonished after riding about a mile to find myself among a crowd of Russian wounded, some in carts and some walking, while the ditches on both sides of the track were filled with those who, unable to find room in a cart, and unable to walk further, had simply dropped from exhaustion. I asked one of the men where they were going, and the reason for this exodus of wounded. He replied that the surgeons that morning had informed them that the field hospitals outside Plevna were so full that it was impossible for all the wounded to be attended to, and called upon

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volunteers to make their own way to another hospital near the Imperial headquarters as best they could. About three thousand had responded to this appeal, and it was among them that I now found myself. After proceeding a short distance, I was especially attracted to one man lying in the ditch on the left of the road, and evidently in great agony. I ascertained that his right shoulder was smashed, and knowing that immediate surgical aid could alone save his life, I asked him whether he felt strong enough to ride a few miles if I lifted him on to my cob. The poor creature was very grateful, and said he would try, so I lifted him on to the saddle and walked by his side, giving him such support as I could with my right arm round his waist. We had not proceeded far when I heard the wheels of a carriage approaching from behind, and looking round saw a Russian general officer in a large open carriage with an officer of the Intendance seated by his side. As soon as the general saw me the carriage stopped, and after a few words hastily exchanged between the occupants they went on, and overtaking me, the general, whom I knew, made some remark as to why I should trouble myself with a wounded man. As he saw, however, that I had evidently no intention of leaving the poor creature behind, he suggested that I should let him take him into his carriage, to which I somewhat angrily replied that if he really wished to assist a wounded man, there were plenty to choose from by the

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roadside. The general and his companion then continued their journey without offering help to any of the poor wretches whom they passed. I soon found that the strength of my wounded friend would fail before I could get him to head-quarters. He was in a semi-fainting condition, and suffering intense pain. At this moment I was overtaken by another carriage, in which was General Skobeleff (the father of the famous young general of that name) with his aide-de-camp. They pulled up and asked me to let them take the man into their carriage, which I was glad to do, as I was sure he could not have continued to ride much longer. I lifted him into the general's carriage, which then proceeded on its way, but subsequently I learned that the poor creature died before reaching the hospital.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

PREDICTION OF THE FALL OF PLEVNA

It was quite by chance that I was enabled to predict the fall of Plevna to within a day or two of the actual surrender of Osman Pasha and his gallant army.

The Imperial headquarters were at that time at a village named Gorny-Studen, and those of the Grand Duke Nicholas at Bogot, some fifteen miles off.

One morning I received a telegram from England directing me to do what I could to obtain the release of three English Red-Cross surgeons who had served with the Turkish army and been made prisoners by the Russians somewhere in the vicinity of Telish, south of Plevna.

I had just mounted my horse with a view to riding to Bogot to see the Grand Duke on the subject, when I met Count Meyendorff, one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, who told me that he was about to drive over to Bogot himself in order to see the Grand Duke on business, and offered me a seat in his carriage, which I accepted.

It is a peculiarity of Russian officers to drive

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instead of ride, whenever it is possible to do so; and at the camp near St. Petersburg it was the invariable practice of all members of the Imperial staff to drive in carriages to the manœuvres every morning, no matter how near the rendezvous might be, and there mount their chargers.

We had driven about half-way to the Grand Duke's headquarters, when we met another carriage occupied by General Todleben, who at this time was practically, though not nominally, in command of the siege operations before Plevna. He was accompanied by an aide-de-camp, and was on his way to the Imperial headquarters to make his report to the Emperor. Both carriages stopped, and we all alighted.

General Todleben, who never disguised his partiality for England and Englishmen, was as usual most cordial with me, and shook me warmly by the hand. Count Meyendorff then led him away a few paces from the carriages, and my knowledge of Russian, of which, perhaps fortunately, I was not suspected, now as on many other occasions proved most useful, for I was able to understand the following conversation.

In reply to the Count's inquiry as to how long General Todleben thought that Plevna could hold out, the General replied, 'According to the information I receive from my Bulgarian spies, I do not think that Osman Pasha has food enough to last more than three weeks.'

'What will he do then?' asked my companion.

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'Will he make a sortie, or will he give orders for a *sauve-qui-peut*, telling his people to make their way as best they can to the Balkans?'

To this General Todleben replied, 'I cannot even guess at what he will try to do, but what I do know is, that if he attempts to break out, in whatever direction it may be, I shall there meet him with sixty thousand men.'

Having seen the Grand Duke Nicholas, and obtained from him a promise that the English Red-Cross surgeons should be released, we returned to headquarters and I immediately telegraphed to London that I had good reason for believing that Plevna could not hold out for more than a month—a prediction which proved to be correct. I added that if the weather then prevailing, namely, intense frost, were to continue, it would be possible for the Russians to cross the Balkans after the fall of Plevna, whereas should a thaw set in, the crossing would be out of the question, as the movement of cavalry and artillery under such conditions would be impossible; and I concluded my telegram by pointing out that at any rate the possibility of the Balkans being crossed that winter should be borne in mind.

Had this contingency not been lost sight of, the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 would, in all probability, have had a very different result.

In order to explain this I must remind my

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readers that the Russian advance on Constantinople was checked, and the Imperial army held at bay, by the heroic defence of Plevna by Osman Pasha.

The original idea was, having masked the Turkish fortress of Rustchuk, to advance *viâ* Plevna to the Balkans, and thence through Adrianople to the Turkish capital. The protracted defence of Plevna rendered the execution of these plans for the time impossible. A regular siege was laid to the fortress, and the stronghold of Rustchuk still remained in the hands of the Turks.

There were two opposing influences at work at that time at the Imperial headquarters with regard to what should be done after the fall of Plevna: one, that of Count Woronzoff Dashkoff, a very smart cavalry leader, who was in especial favour with the Emperor, and whose advice was to cross the Balkans at all hazards, immediately after the fall of Plevna. The other influence was that of Todleben, who counselled a less rash policy, insisting that further winter operations should, for the time being, be confined to the siege of Rustchuk, the capture of which fortress would secure to the Russian army a direct and safe line of communication with its base, and thus materially improve the military situation at the reopening of the campaign in the following spring. The advice of the younger officer prevailed.

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For the sake of clearness, it is here necessary to anticipate events.

Plevna fell on the 10th December, and immediately afterwards, the frost continuing, General Gourko advanced to the Balkans, which he succeeded in crossing, although at a terrible loss of life from cold. Subsequently several passes were forced, and the Russian army reached Adrianople, not in regiments and battalions, but in fractions of such units.

Soon after the fall of Plevna, the Emperor returned to Russia, and for more reasons than one it was considered advisable by the authorities at home that I should not remain with the Russian army after His Majesty had left it. I therefore returned to Bucharest and, after having disposed of my horses, equipment, etc., started for London, where I was when the news of General Dragomiroff and others having crossed the Balkans was received.

On the day this intelligence reached London the late Lord Rowton came to tell me that Lord Beaconsfield, who was then Prime Minister, wished to see me at once. I found him at luncheon, and his lordship immediately asked me whether I had heard the news, and on my replying that I was not aware of anything beyond that which had appeared in the morning papers, he desired Lord Rowton to show me the Government telegrams received that morning, one of which contained the news of the forcing of the Balkans by the Russians.

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Lord Beaconsfield then asked me if I could guarantee that the Russian army would not reach Adrianople in less than six weeks. I told his lordship that I was afraid it was quite possible that they would be there in a time considerably less than that he had mentioned. I also told him that the Turks, as they still held Sofia on the right flank of the Russian advance, might check it, and that if Sofia were held by European troops, not subject either to panic or bribery, the Russian advance would undoubtedly be considerably delayed, but that considering that the place was garrisoned by Turks, subject to both those influences, I thought the chances were that Adrianople would be reached within a month.

Lord Beaconsfield appeared much grieved at hearing this, and said gravely, 'If you can only guarantee me six weeks, I see my way.' Although, of course, his lordship did not tell me so, I was convinced at the time that what was in his mind was the moving of the troops from Malta to Constantinople, which he could not hope to do in less than the period he mentioned.

I have since heard, on the best authority, that when my telegram saying that the contingency of the Balkans being crossed in the winter should not be forgotten was communicated to the War Office, it was returned to Lord Beaconsfield with the following note on it, 'Colonel Wellesley does not seem to know what he is talking about; the

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Balkans never have been crossed in the winter, and never will be.'

If this really happened, it would seem that the Prime Minister, trusting to the statement of the War Office as to the impossibility of the Balkans being crossed in the winter, deferred moving the troops from Malta until it was too late.

I do not suppose that any accurate statement of the loss of life in the Russian and Turkish armies operating in Asia, as well as in Europe, during this war will ever be available, but to whatever enormous figures it may attain must be added over a million lives of the civilian population of European Turkey alone, between the crossing of the Balkans by the Russians after the fall of Plevna and the armistice which preceded the Treaty of San Stefano. My father showed me a letter which he had received from Sir Henry Layard, who was then our ambassador at Constantinople, in which he put the Turkish civilian losses during that period at the figure I have mentioned, and described the flight of the population before the Russian advance — parents dragging their children through the snow and leaving them one by one to die of cold and starvation when too exhausted to struggle any further.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE SURRENDER OF OSMAN

SOME days before the fall of Plevna the Russians had learned from their spies that Osman Pasha was making active preparations for a sortie in the direction of the Vid. At daybreak on the morning of the 10th of December, the Turks, having evacuated most of their works and concentrated beyond the Vid during the night, made a gallant attack against the Russian positions, and succeeded in breaking through their first lines. Their success, however, was but momentary, and the Russians, bringing up reinforcements, hurled back the Turkish advance, which speedily became a rout. This was at about 8.30 A.M. A lull in the fighting followed, and soon after midday the waving of a white flag in the vicinity of the cliffs of Plevna proclaimed the surrender of Osman Pasha with his whole army.

On the 11th of December, the day after the fall of Plevna, a grand *Te Deum* was held in what was known as Osman Pasha's redoubt. It was attended by the Emperor and his staff, the Grand Duke Nicholas with his staff, and representatives

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of other portions of the army, as well as by a few foreign officers.

At the conclusion of the religious ceremony, the Emperor conferred on his brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas, the Grand Cross of the Order of St. George, placing the ribbon over his shoulder with his own hands.

This is the greatest military honour which can be bestowed on a Russian soldier, and I do not suppose that such a mark of distinction was ever so little deserved.

After the ceremony we all mounted and rode down into the picturesque village of Plevna, in the valley below.

I cannot imagine a sight more sad or more touching than here presented itself, where dead and dying were to be seen piled up in all directions, especially at the cross-roads.

On our way we passed the improvised burial-ground, the size of which alone was evidence of how great the losses of the garrison had been. The emaciation of both dead and wounded indicated the terrible sufferings inflicted by hunger during the siege. It is no exaggeration to say that their arms and legs, simply skin and bone, looked more like sticks than limbs, while their sunken and hollow faces showed the fearful havoc of starvation.

The streets, or rather lanes, were still blocked by the remnants of the Turkish army being marched under Russian or Roumanian escort to join their

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comrade prisoners on the other side of the river Vid.

A piteous sight was presented by six old white-bearded Turks squatting on the ground with their backs against the wall of a house, all of whom had lost their eyes, and whose faces were blackened and charred. There they sat, motionless and without a word of complaint, as our proud cavalcade passed by. I was told that these poor creatures had all lost their eyes at the same time by the bursting of an ammunition wagon.

We suddenly came to two large wooden gates on our right, which, as the Emperor approached, were thrown open to receive us. They led into a long narrow yard, at the far end of which was a dirty white cottage with a small verandah round it.

A long table with a snow-white cloth had been placed along each side of the yard, and these tables were both covered with such delicacies and wines as an Imperial cuisine is alone able to supply amidst the miserable surroundings of a campaign.

The Emperor, dismounting, at once proceeded to the cottage, which he entered, accompanied by the Minister of War and one or two other high Russian officials.

It was evident that we were to have our luncheon here, and the spacious yard being soon filled by the staff, the gates were closed. The service of luncheon was long delayed, and no

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one knew the reason, but it was rumoured that we were waiting for the arrival of Osman Pasha, who had been sent for in order to formally give up his sword to the Emperor. As, however, it was known that, by order of the Grand Duke Nicholas, Osman had already started as a prisoner under escort for Bucharest, it seemed scarcely credible that the Emperor would bring him back rather than spare so gallant an enemy the extra humiliation of a personal surrender. This humiliation, however, the hero of Plevna was destined to submit to, and we soon heard that messengers had been sent to order his return, wounded though he was.

After about an hour and a half the ponderous gates of the yard again slowly opened, disclosing Osman Pasha, who had alighted from his carriage. With one arm round the neck of his Turkish servant, and the other round that of a Cossack, he was supported rather than carried into the yard, where we were all awaiting him with the intense interest naturally aroused by the desire to see the man who had, for so many months, successfully resisted all the onslaughts of the flower of the Russian army.

To the credit of the Russians be it said, that the moment it was realised that the wounded man they beheld was Osman Pasha, a spontaneous cry of 'Bravo, Osman!' arose from the entire staff, which must have consisted of between two and three hundred officers. All rose to their

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feet and saluted the wounded foe as he passed, and what most impressed me was the fact that I did not see a single face among the Russian officers that was not moistened by a tear of pity and admiration. It was a most impressive scene. Supported as above described, Osman made his way slowly between the two tables loaded with the wines which we were soon to drink in celebration of his fall, towards the Emperor's cottage, into which he was carried.

It was not long before he reappeared after having surrendered his sword to His Majesty, who, I am glad to record, at once returned it to him as a mark of his respect for so brave and so brilliant an adversary.

Our luncheon was then served, and as we sat down to it I could not but feel how great was the contrast between the luxury of this repast and the anguish, misery, and starvation without.

After luncheon we remounted to return to headquarters, but had not proceeded far along the thronged thoroughfares of the little village before a block occurred at the head of our procession. After a few moments we again started, and I then discovered the cause of our temporary halt, for on the left of the road we came upon poor wounded Osman's carriage, with him a prisoner in it, pulled right into a ditch, and kept there, surrounded by the Cossack escort, in order to make room for His Majesty of All the Russias and his staff to pass!

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In all probability the officer in command of the escort, seeing the Emperor approaching from the rear, feared that Osman's carriage would be in his way, and therefore had it drawn into a ditch on the side of the road in this insulting manner. Surely the Turkish hero was entitled to more generous treatment and respect in the very village which his valour, sagacity, and skill had turned into the formidable fortress which had defied and paralysed the Russian hosts for so many weary and anxious months.

On the afternoon of the same day I proceeded with one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp to see the Turkish army, now prisoners of war, on the other side of the river Vid. We were joined by several other Russian officers. Our road crossed the battlefield of Osman Pasha's sortie. It was bitterly cold, the thermometer registering fifteen degrees of frost, and the numbers of the dead and wounded Turks on each side of the road testified to the severity of the previous morning's battle. The Russian dead and wounded had been removed, but this had not been the case with regard to the Turks, perhaps because the Russian military medical organisation was unable to cope with the enormous demand so suddenly made on it.

The ground on both sides of the road was studded with little camp-fires which the poor wounded Turks had been able to make for themselves, and round which those strong enough to

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move had gathered in silent resignation. Here and there a wounded man would be seen crawling along the ground, dragging after him a piece of wood with which to keep his own particular little fire alight. Horses, dead and maimed, also covered the plain. With all this misery around one on that cold winter afternoon, only to be intensified by the approach of night, it was terrible to feel how helpless one was to do anything to alleviate the tortures of these patient suffering creatures. It is almost incredible that the Russians and Roumanians did not do more, or indeed anything, to mitigate the misery of their poor wounded enemies.

On the road we met countless carts filled with Turkish rifles, band instruments, and other trophies of war. These same carts would have been better employed in the conveyance of the wounded Turks to the nearest field hospitals.

After we had seen the Turkish army—now disarmed and prisoners of war, and a sadder sight can hardly be imagined—we commenced to ride homewards, as it was rapidly getting dusk. As we recrossed the battlefield, dimly lighted as it now was by the fitful lights of the camp fires, we met an ambulance wagon, the only one I saw the whole of that eventful day, and at the same time a handsome young wounded Turk came up to me, and pointing to a camp fire about a hundred yards off, made me understand that he had a comrade there badly wounded,

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who he begged might be placed in the ambulance. Why he picked me out amongst so many I am unable to say. Perhaps he recognised my nationality from my uniform, and thought he was more likely to obtain assistance from an Englishman than from a Russian. Be that as it may, the Emperor's aide-de-camp with whom I was riding ordered two soldiers, who were following the cart, to go with the Turk, bring back his wounded friend, and place him in the ambulance. As I saw from their faces that the soldiers had not the slightest intention of carrying out this order, I kept my eye on them as we rode on. My suspicion proved to be correct for, as soon as we had left them, instead of accompanying the Turk, they got into the ambulance and drove on. When I drew the aide-de-camp's attention to what had happened, he galloped after the ambulance and gave the soldiers the benefit of some rough language, which they richly deserved. We then waited to see the order carried out. The men followed the young Turk, and brought in his wounded friend who, however, died as they were placing him in the ambulance. What followed was sad in the extreme for, seeing what we had done for the poor creature who had just died, many of the less severely wounded Turks came to us to crave the same assistance on behalf of their more helpless companions, but the solitary ambulance having disappeared we were powerless to do anything,

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and my heart sank within me as we turned away, leaving these poor wounded people to the unspeakable horrors of that coming winter's night.

The final surrender of Osman Pasha and his entire army brings to my mind two incidents, of one of which I was myself an eye-witness. On the 18th of September, immediately after the defeat of the Russians in their great attack on Plevna, and three months before the fall of that fortress, a council of war was held on a small hillock opposite the great Grivitza redoubt, and was attended by the Emperor, the Grand Duke Nicholas, Commander-in-Chief, Prince Charles of Roumania, in nominal command of the troops round Plevna, General Milutin, Minister of War, General Nepokoitchitsky, Chief of the Staff of the army in the field, General Levitsky, Assistant Chief of the Staff, and General Zotoff, Acting Chief of the Staff to Prince Charles. I was not in that part of the field myself at the time, but an officer who was present told me that the question as to what immediate steps should be taken in consequence of the disaster which had befallen the Russian arms was there discussed. When asked his opinion, the Grand Duke Nicholas said that there was only one thing to do, namely to retire at once to the Danube, erect a *tête-de-pont* to secure them from attack, and remain there until such reinforcements should arrive from Russia as would enable them

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to resume the offensive. The Emperor then turning to the Minister of War said, 'What do you think, Milutin?' to which the minister replied, 'I must differ from his Imperial Highness. Although I am fully alive to the gravity of the defeat we have sustained, and to the consequences of it, in my opinion Osman Pasha is neither strong enough nor mobile enough to attack us, and even if he were, I think it derogatory to the prestige of the Russian army that it should retire as suggested by the Grand Duke. My advice is to send for reinforcements, but to await their arrival on the positions we now occupy.' The Grand Duke then said, 'If that is your opinion, General Milutin, you had better assume the command of the army yourself.' Here the Emperor interposed, saying to his brother, 'No, you shall retain the command of the army, but the plan suggested by the Minister of War shall be carried out.' This episode seems to be confirmed by the second, for the accuracy of which I can myself vouch.

Three months afterwards, on the morning of the fall of Plevna, and after Osman Pasha, having failed in his desperate effort to break through the Russian lines of investment, had surrendered, the Emperor and his staff were on the parapet of a redoubt commanding a view of the valley in which Plevna lay. The Grand Duke Nicholas, with his standard-bearer and staff, could be seen riding about below us. The Emperor was anxiously awaiting the news that

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Plevna was absolutely in the possession of the Russians, and when intelligence of the complete surrender arrived, with tears rolling down his cheeks he turned to the Minister of War, who stood beside him, and seizing him by the hand said, 'Milutin, I give you the Grand Cross of the Order of St. George,' to which the minister replied, 'Your Majesty, I do not deserve it. I have had no active command, and have simply been in attendance on your Majesty'; whereupon the Emperor, pointing across the valley to the hillock on which the council of war was held on that fateful September day, said, 'I owe Plevna to you. Do you think I shall ever forget the advice you gave us on yonder hillock? and if he,' pointing to his brother in the valley, 'were here now, he should thank you in my presence for the counsel you then gave.'

Although many officers were present at the time, they were, for the most part, some little distance off, and engaged in conversation, and I think that I was the only person near enough to hear what passed between the Emperor and his Minister of War.

With the fall of Plevna my experiences of the campaign came to an end, and I returned shortly afterwards to England.

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CHAPTER XXX

MILUTIN, IGNATIEFF, SCHOUVALOFF, AND TCHÉRÉVINE

THERE can be no doubt that General Milutin, apart from the services he rendered to the Emperor and his country during this campaign, richly deserved the gratitude of the Russian army for the numerous and varied reforms introduced by him during the period of his control of the War Office. The thanks of the private soldier, whose condition of life was simply deplorable before Milutin took office, are especially due to that minister, who was indeed the soldier's friend.

General Milutin was one of the few liberal-minded statesmen in Russia who, together with Loris Melikoff and Abaza, hoped for the regeneration of their country by means of the gradual introduction of liberal reforms. These three men, however, were destined eventually to make room for Ignatieff, Vannoffsky, and Bunge. The immediate cause of the resignation of these ministers was the unexpected publication of the famous Imperial manifesto of May 1881, in which the Emperor Alexander III. proclaimed to the world his intention of upholding the autocratic system

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of government in its entirety. This ukase, to which allusion is made elsewhere in these pages, was drawn up by the famous Katkoff, editor of the *Moscow Gazette*, who had been summoned to St. Petersburg by M. Pobedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod, for the purpose and, being in direct contradiction to the liberal tendencies of the Loris Melikoff government, ultimately led to the resignation of the principal members of that administration. Thus it was that all the hopes of the moderate liberals and true patriots, which were centred in the progressive policy of Loris Melikoff, were doomed to disappointment. This disappointment, moreover, was all the greater inasmuch as at the first council of ministers which assembled to discuss the question of reaction *versus* reform, not only did the latter triumph, but the Emperor congratulated Loris Melikoff on his success, saying that the majority of votes entirely coincided with his own personal opinions. Unfortunately, however, during the interval which preceded the second council, M. Pobedonostseff, assisted by the Grand Duke Vladimir, persuaded the Emperor to change his mind, and when the second council of ministers met, the manifesto of M. Katkoff was produced and laid on the table. The mine which was thus sprung under the feet of the Melikoff ministry could have but one result, more especially as it at once put an end to that solidarity which the Emperor himself had, at the previous meeting,

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said existed between himself and his ministers. Loris Melikoff, General Milutin, and others tendered their resignations, determined not to be parties to a policy which they believed to be ruinous to their country. In order, however, to avoid the talk and scandal which must inevitably follow a simultaneous resignation, they consented to retire from the administration one by one. As to General Milutin, he was not only liberal-minded, but also extremely humane. Only a few years before I went to St. Petersburg, prisoners condemned to Siberia had to walk to their destination with their wrists chained to a long pole, a precaution against escape, and their wives and children were sometimes allowed to accompany them. On one occasion, in the middle of winter, an acquaintance of mine, Baron Fredericks, on his return from visiting his property near Perm, met a convoy of prisoners on their road to the mines. They had halted at a wayside station, and lying in the road were the dead bodies of five children who had followed their parents as far as they could, but who had at last succumbed, frozen to death. On reaching St. Petersburg, Baron Fredericks reported the matter to General Milutin, who at once ordered the construction of several vessels in which to convey the prisoners as far as possible by water.

It is from Nijni Novgorod that all those condemned to Siberia take their final departure from Europe. Twice a week they arrive by train in

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the middle of the night at the Nijni terminus, whence they are conveyed under escort to the river bank. Here tugs are in waiting to take them to the huge black floating cages at anchor in the middle of the river, and in which, before daylight, they find themselves steaming towards their dreaded destination.

Although this manner of transporting the prisoners is far less cruel than the old system, by which they had to march the whole distance, many perishing on the road, I do not know a more depressing sight than to meet, as I have on several occasions, one of these great convict-ships conveying its living freight of miserable human beings to the unknown horrors of Siberia. The vessels are built in two or three tiers of barred cages, each tier having a gallery outside it, which forms the sentry's beat. I once met one of these vessels steaming slowly down the Volga by night, and the dim lights behind the bars, together with the sentries with drawn swords patrolling the galleries, combined to produce a picture of inexpressible sadness.

With reference to General Ignatieff, two incidents come to my mind which, I think, are worth recording as extremely characteristic of the man.

As I have said before, although his hatred of England was proverbial, he was the first person to take me by the hand on my arrival at headquarters after my disagreeable interview with the Grand Duke Nicholas, and, although I was a

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COUNT IGNATIEFF.

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total stranger to him, he was diplomatic enough to be civil, and even cordial, making an agreeable distinction between the individual and the nation he represented.

After dinner, one evening at the beginning of the war, and before the Imperial headquarters had crossed to the south side of the Danube, I was walking to and fro, towards the river and back, talking to another foreign officer. As we turned, we suddenly saw the well-known figure of Ignatieff standing on the bank and clearly defined against the evening sky. He was so much engaged in conversation with two men in plain clothes that for some time he did not observe us.

To see civilian dress in such circumstances was so unusual that we at once came to the conclusion, which turned out to be correct, that the men were two of Ignatieff's spies from Constantinople. Not wishing to disturb the trio we discreetly turned away, but in doing so attracted the general's attention. He at once followed us, and placing his arm on my shoulder said, 'Did you see those two men to whom I was speaking? What do you think they are?' I replied that I had seen them, but of course knew nothing about them. 'They are two Greek merchants,' said the general, 'who have been turned out of Constantinople because they were supposed to be Russian spies, and these poor deluded individuals, having heard that I at one time enjoyed certain influence with the Turkish Government, have come all the

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way here, notwithstanding that there is now war between the two countries, in order to ask my assistance in obtaining leave for them to return to Constantinople! Russian spies indeed! why, they neither of them know one single word of Russian.' The general had scarcely uttered these words when, hearing footsteps behind us, we turned round and saw the two men following, one of whom, in the best of Russian, and before the general could stop him, asked some question with regard to what he was to do, and the other chimed in with some other remark in the same language. I could not resist expressing my surprise at the marvellous rapidity with which these two Greek merchants had overcome the difficulties of the Russian language. The Count burst into roars of laughter at having been thus found out, and, quite unabashed, changed the conversation, and went on talking as if nothing had happened.

The other incident to which I refer occurred when I was paying him a visit one day in his tent. He was talking to me about the late Lord Salisbury, for whom he professed to have the greatest admiration and affection. He referred to the time when he was Russian ambassador to the Porte. English engineer officers had been sent to Turkey to survey the Constantinople lines of defence. Lord Salisbury was there at the time, and 'one day,' said the general, 'a Pasha came to the Russian embassy and offered to sell me the secret plans of the English engineers! This was too

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much for me. To think that I could be guilty of so unfriendly an act towards *mon ami Salsboori* as to buy the secret plans of his officers! I, of course, most indignantly declined the offer, and told Salsboori that he really ought to be more careful as to whom he intrusted documents of that nature!'

It is a curious fact that notwithstanding Count Ignatieff's inveterate hatred of Britain, and everything British, the dream of his life was to become Russian ambassador in London. While on this subject, I may state that Count Schouvaloff, on the contrary, had no desire whatever to become an ambassador, and least of all to the Court of St. James's. The circumstances which led to his appointment are perhaps not generally known. He had for some years occupied what was then the most important post in the Russian service—that of chief of the Gendarmerie or 'Troisième Section'—the secret police. In this capacity he had ruled with a rod of iron, and his very name, notwithstanding his exceptional charm of manner, was sufficient to make people tremble. His influence over his sovereign was great as long as it lasted, and he traded on it to the extent of threatening resignation whenever he found himself unable to have exactly his own way. He, however, pursued this policy too far, and his master's patience was at last exhausted. One morning when the Emperor was at Ems, on Count Schouvaloff entering his room, His Majesty

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exclaimed, 'I congratulate you, Schouvaloff,' and in reply to the Count's inquiry as to the cause of the congratulation, he said, 'I appoint you my ambassador to England.' Count Schouvaloff had no alternative but to express his gratitude for the appointment. He had threatened resignation once too often.

I must also say a few words concerning General Tchérévine who, although in a comparatively subordinate position when I knew him, subsequently rose to great power.

When I first met him he was a colonel, and had just succeeded Colonel Sherimétieff in the command of the Emperor's personal escort, which consisted of four squadrons, two of which were quartered in St. Petersburg, and the others in the Caucasus. This, as may be imagined, was a much envied position.

Tchérévine was a man of medium height and slight build, with small piercing eyes which allowed nothing to pass unnoticed. He generally wore the picturesque Circassian uniform of the escort, in which he looked extremely well. Although he was not a man of many words, I frequently had very interesting conversations with him, especially during the war, when he continually asked me to sup with him in his bivouac, where his men cooked a most excellent dish, 'shashlic,' by grilling small pieces of irregular shaped mutton on a skewer over the embers of an expiring camp fire.

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He was always very friendly with me personally, although he never attempted to disguise his profound hatred of my country. He was a man with whom one could converse openly, without fear of temper being lost on either side, and many were the discussions we had, especially on the foreign politics of our two Governments. He nicknamed me 'La Perfide Albion,' and if he saw me coming would always say, '*Voici la Perfide Albion qui arrive.*'

Although he always struck me as being an extremely able man, he was as a rule so reticent and retiring that I confess I never anticipated the wonderful career that was in store for him. As head of the Secret Police of the whole Empire, a position more or less created for him by Alexander III., he must have wielded more absolute power than any single subject of the Russian emperors has ever done before or since. While in this position an attempt was one day made on his life by a man who gained access to his office for the purpose, but fortunately the attempt failed. He died, however, shortly afterwards. Tchérévine was a great opponent of Ignatieff.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE BERLIN CONGRESS

THREE days after the fall of Plevna I left the Russian army and returned *viâ* Bucharest to England. During my stay in the Roumanian capital, I had an opportunity of taking my leave of the Emperor as he passed through on his return to St. Petersburg.

It will be remembered that the Russian army crossed the Balkans the same winter and advanced to the outskirts of Constantinople, where the famous treaty of peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at San Stefano, on the 3rd of March 1878.

The two powers were subsequently compelled to submit this treaty to the Congress of Berlin, which assembled on June 13th. England was represented at this great International Tribunal by Lord Beaconsfield (the Prime Minister) and Lord Salisbury (the Foreign Secretary), whereas the representatives of Russia were Prince Gortchakoff (Chancellor of the Empire) and Count Schouvaloff (Russian ambassador to the Court of St. James's).

As this Congress was the crowning episode of

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the Russian campaign against Turkey, I must here relate an anecdote with regard to it which was told me in Vienna by the late Count Schouvaloff, as he passed through that town on his return from Berlin at the conclusion of the conference.

It appears that the plan adopted at Berlin was that the representatives of the Powers should discuss in private the questions specially affecting their particular Governments, and that Prince Bismarck, the President, when advised that they had come to a decision with regard to the point discussed, would at the next meeting of the conference announce that the representatives of such and such countries had come to an understanding, and would then call upon the senior of the two to lay the decision arrived at before the plenipotentiaries.

Up to a certain date all matters between Great Britain and Russia, said Count Schouvaloff, had been discussed and decided in this very convenient way between Lord Salisbury and himself with great success, and when the crucial question of the whole Congress, namely the line of demarcation of East Roumelia, came up for settlement, these two statesmen, as usual, discussed the matter privately, and finally came to an understanding on the subject. Count Schouvaloff then reported the result of his negotiations with Lord Salisbury to his chief, the Imperial Chancellor. On this occasion old Prince Gortchakoff flew into a violent passion,

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reminded Count Schouvaloff that he was his subordinate, and had no authority to come to any arrangement with Lord Salisbury without consultation with himself, and that, although he had allowed minor questions to be settled between the Count and Lord Salisbury, with regard to this question, the most vital of the Congress, he had no intention of being overridden by his junior, and intended to settle the matter himself with Lord Beaconsfield. Dumb-struck by such a reception, and powerless to object, Count Schouvaloff betook himself at once to Lord Salisbury, and told him of the scene which had just taken place between him and the Chancellor. Lord Salisbury was much amused, and said there was nothing for it but that the two senior representatives of Russia and England should discuss the matter, and that arrangements should at once be made for an early interview between Prince Gortchakoff and Lord Beaconsfield for that purpose. This was accordingly done, and an agreement having been arrived at between the two senior statesmen, exactly the same, of course, as that which had been come to between Lord Salisbury and Count Schouvaloff, Prince Bismarck was informed that Russia and England had agreed as to the line of demarcation of East Roumelia. At the next meeting of the Congress the Prince, addressing the members, said that he was happy to inform them that on this, the most difficult question of all, England and Russia were in

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PRINCE GORTCHAKOFF.

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accord, adding that any arrangement satisfactory to these two countries would, he imagined, be agreeable to the rest of the Powers. He then called upon Prince Gortchakoff to inform the Congress of the arrangement arrived at.

Prince Gortchakoff, rising in accordance with this invitation, commenced his statement. He had not proceeded far, however, when Lord Beaconsfield, also rising, protested that he had never agreed to anything of the sort.

Prince Bismarck at once, with his usual tact, said that there was evidently some mistake, that the Russian Chancellor and the English Prime Minister would doubtless meet again to discuss the matter, and then proceeded to some other question.

A few moments afterwards Count Schouvaloff, who was sitting next to his chief, felt a violent tug at his sleeve, and looking round, saw Prince Gortchakoff gazing in an extreme state of excitement at the map which Lord Beaconsfield had before him. 'This is treason! this is treason!' muttered the Chancellor. Count Schouvaloff, at a loss to understand what Prince Gortchakoff meant, asked for an explanation, upon which the Prince, pointing to Lord Beaconsfield's map, said, 'See, Lord Beaconsfield is in possession of our secret map!' It appears that the Russian map, of which there was only one copy, had three lines on it: one red, indicating the frontier the Russians desired; the second blue, showing the

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frontier they would accept if unable to obtain all they wished; and the third yellow, which marked the last concession that they could possibly make, and that very map was indeed lying on the table in front of Lord Beaconsfield. Count Schouvaloff, staggered at what he saw, cast his eyes hopelessly around the table in search of an explanation, and, in doing so, saw in front of Prince Gortchakoff a map that he had never seen before, and which on closer inspection proved to be the English secret map.

The two aged statesmen when they parted, after their meeting to discuss the question, had made a mistake in the maps, the English representative taking up the Russian secret map, and the Russian that of Lord Beaconsfield.

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CHAPTER XXXII

RUSSIA AND INDIA

I HAVE never been one of those to whom the invasion of India by Russia is a constant nightmare. By this I do not mean that we are to go to sleep and take no precautions against such an attempt for, even if a successful invasion were impossible, it would always be in the power of Russia to make such demonstrations in the direction of our Eastern possessions as would not only prevent our being able to withdraw troops from India in the event of our requiring them elsewhere, but would possibly oblige us to reinforce them. This, in the case of our being involved in serious complications either with Russia herself or any other power, would be a matter of very grave importance to Great Britain. The extension of her railways in the direction of India has also rendered our great Asiatic rival more formidable than she was twenty years ago, but still there is a great deal in what the late Lord Salisbury said in relation to this question, when he gave the advice 'Look at a large map.'

That the invasion of India has occupied the thoughts of many Russian soldiers and statesmen,

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especially the former, is not of course to be denied, and to lead a victorious army across our Indian frontiers has been as much the dream of many a Muscovite general as it was the ambition of Admiral Popoff to sail a victorious squadron up the waters of the Thames. These firebrands have, however, fortunately hitherto been kept in check by the saner counsels prevailing at the Russian Foreign Office, where the weakness of Russia in Central Asia and our strength in India are fully appreciated.

Although what I have to relate in the next few pages will, I think, conclusively show how vigilant it behoves us to be with regard to the doings of the Russians in the direction of India, it in no way points to any cause for alarm. There is a vast difference between caution and fear.

The present Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, when Governor-General of the Caucasus in the reign of his brother, Alexander II., elaborated a well-considered scheme for the approach of his Emperor's forces to the Indian dominions of our Queen. Whether Persia would have appreciated such a use of a portion of her territory as was contemplated in this scheme, it is not for me to say, but fortunately for Russia as well as for ourselves, the wisdom of the Emperor and his advisers put an end, at any rate for the time, to the outrageous proposals of his ambitious brother. All the same, the fact remains that the proposals were made,

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and received all the consideration which their importance demanded. The same Grand Duke was continually suggesting military expeditions along the Atrek, as preliminary moves in his great game, but to the credit of the Emperor and his Minister for War be it said, his proposals received but scant encouragement.

Mr. M'Gahan on his return from the Khivan expedition, in which he took part as correspondent for an American paper, told me that although the superior officers, with whom he had frequent occasions of conversing on the subject, did not think that a successful invasion of India by Russia was possible, the junior officers were much more sanguine, and thought that it was but a matter of time. Officers of standing, however, although they did not dream of invasion, considered the position of Russia in Central Asia as being a most important factor, should Russia and England ever be engaged in a conflict elsewhere.

At the end of 1876 or the commencement of the following year, Monsieur Vassilieff, Professor of Chinese at the University of St. Petersburg, submitted to the Imperial Government his views as to what the policy of Russia should be in the event of war with Great Britain, which he then considered inevitable. According to the professor's views, England would arm Turcomans, and attempt to set them, as also the peoples of Khiva, Bokhara, Kashgar, and Afghanistan, against Russia, and would at the same time employ

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persons to preach socialism among the Mussulman subjects of the Emperor.

M. Vassilieff considered that these populations could more easily be turned against England by the Russians, a consideration which he felt sure had already been embodied in the plans of his Government. The position of Russia in Asia, continued the expert, would be of immense value in the war which he conceived at the time to be imminent between his country and Turkey allied with Great Britain.

As the object of the latter would be to drive Russia out of Central Asia rather than out of Turkey, no Russian successes in the European possessions of the Sultan would force her to make peace. An actual menace to India could therefore alone influence her.

Such a menace could be made, said M. Vassilieff, at once, although not with so much effect as some years later, when the railway from Orenburg to Samarcand would be finished. The hostile attitude of England was doubtless to be attributed to a desire to hinder the completion of this line. If Great Britain was not above seeking allies in Asia, why should Russia hesitate to do the same? England was abhorred by all Governments and peoples in the East, whereas Russia was hailed as the only deliverer from British oppression. The professor feared that sufficient attention might not be paid to this fact, and urged that, although the East would be unable to resist the

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strength of England if left to itself, things would be very different if it were guided by Russia. Japan, he said, aspired to become a great naval power, and desired to possess the Islands of the Pacific. She had an army and a fleet. The former had begged to be led to war, and the latter sought an opportunity of distinguishing itself. The same was the case in China, where the Government did not know how to dispose of the volunteers recruited to suppress the recent insurrection, and who demanded the continuation of their pay. The united fleets of Japan, China, and Russia would be sufficient to check the audacity of England in those waters. Even if a successful descent on the islands by the Japanese and Chinese could not be counted on, English commerce would at any rate be destroyed. This result would please America and Germany, whose merchant fleets in that ocean were the most numerous after that of Great Britain. The neutrality of America and Germany would thus be secured. The co-operation of China would be of paramount importance. Nowhere was England more detested. The dynasty owed to the 'red barbarians' [the British] the destruction of the Emperor's magnificent palace. China would make any sacrifice for revenge on its cursed enemy [again the British]. The news of the extension of the power of Russia, and of her proximity to India, was everywhere hailed with delight. Was it therefore possible, argued the professor, that Russia should fail to persuade

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China to take part in this war? Russia should show her that the present was an opportunity not to be lost. The Russian Government was further assured by M. Vassilieff that several independent powers on the confines of India, such as Burmah and Nepaul, were anxiously waiting for an opportunity of waging war against England. Every embassy from these countries to Pekin came, he said, with complaints of British oppression, and implored Chinese assistance. Should Russia succeed in obtaining the alliance of these powers, England could no longer concentrate her forces on the north-west frontiers of India, and then, pursued M. Vassilieff, the troops of Afghanistan and Cashmere, with a small contingent of Russians, would be sufficient to drive the English out of India.

Professor Vassilieff had great ideas.

When Mr. Eugene Schuyler returned from Central Asia in 1874, he gave me a most interesting account of an interview with Abdur Rahman Khan, cousin of the famous Shere Ali, and father of the present ruler of Afghanistan.

Mr. Schuyler, desirous of ascertaining the feelings of the Afghans towards England, commenced a conversation with that object. Speaking through a Russian interpreter, he first inquired whether the subsidy granted by Great Britain to the Ameer of Afghanistan tended to any great extent to secure a feeling of friendship towards England on the part of the Afghans. Abdur Rahman replied

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that no doubt Shere Ali received the subsidy with pleasure, but that all the riches of India would never allay the feeling of hatred with which the British were regarded by the Afghans.

Mr. Schuyler then asked whether, in the opinion of Abdur Rahman, the Afghans would be willing to fight against England in the event of her being engaged in a war with some other great power. 'Were England at war,' said Abdur Rahman, 'with any great country, Afghanistan would willingly attack the British in India, but on the sole condition that no harm should be done to the natives, and that the war should be exclusively against the English.'

Abdur Rahman entertained great hopes of being able to overthrow the power of his cousin in Afghanistan where, he said, he was himself most popular, and that all he required was money.

At that time Abdur Rahman was in the pay of the Russian Government, from which he received an annual allowance of 25,000 roubles.

It is a curious fact that this very man was subsequently placed by Great Britain on the throne of Afghanistan, and that notwithstanding his long sojourn among the Russians and his intimate knowledge of their methods, he remained loyal to the power which made him the ruler of his people. There was considerable misgiving at first, lest his Russian training should throw him into the arms of that country, but he remained true to us to the last, and at his

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death was succeeded by his son Habibulla, the present Ameer.

In 1874 it was arranged, I believe with the consent and assistance of the Government of India, that a certain Russian savant, Professor Minaeff, should undertake a journey to India for scientific purposes. It was also decided that his route should be *viâ* Tashkendt, Bokhara, Balkh, and Cabul to Peshawur. When General Kaufmann, at that time Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, heard of this proposed journey, he immediately suggested to the War Minister that the professor should be accompanied by an officer named Rijikoff, who would be able to survey and make sketches of Peshawur and the roads leading to it. It was proposed that Rijikoff should accompany the professor as far as Peshawur, and that he should assume the position of the professor's assistant, which would enable him to make excursions right and left *en route*, as well as expeditions from Peshawur. General Kaufmann assured the Minister for War that the officer in question was most anxious to undertake the journey, and that he, General Kaufmann, was prepared to pay all expenses from his funds as Governor-General of Turkestan. Rijikoff was not to make regular surveys, but to take notes and make sketches, and fill in the details from memory afterwards, and he was to return by the same route in order to verify his observations. After due consideration, General

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Kaufmann was told that it was not thought possible for the officer to conceal his identity and evade the vigilance of the British, as the latter were on the *qui vive*, and that his detection would lead to serious complications. The expedition therefore had better be postponed.

General Kaufmann subsequently informed the Minister of War that Professor Minaeff was unable on that occasion to proceed to India otherwise than by sea, and that therefore the journey of Rijikoff, which he considered of the greatest importance, could not be undertaken. This communication crossed the above-mentioned answer to the general's proposal.

The Minister of War afterwards stated that as General Kaufmann attached so much importance to an expedition of this nature, he would endeavour to carry out his wishes at a future time, and in more favourable circumstances. Shortly afterwards I had another conversation with General Kaufmann, who called on me with a view to ascertaining whether, in my opinion, the moment was favourable for him to propose a journey on the part of Russian officers from Central Asia to India, where they could meet British officers and discuss matters in an amicable spirit. The general felt sure that if English officers were once to become acquainted with some of those in the Russian service, they would all soon be firm friends, and the prevailing ridiculous suspicions with regard to the designs of Russia

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would for ever disappear! Although I replied that anything which would tend to strengthen the good relations then existing between Russia and England should be encouraged, I was inwardly amused as I thought of the kind of officers he would send, and of the nature of the instructions they would receive before starting. I added that I was afraid that the journey through Afghanistan would be of too dangerous a nature to admit of the realisation of his proposal, to which His Excellency replied that if Shere Ali would answer for the safe passage of Russian officers through his dominions, he, General Kaufmann, could find men ready to undertake the risk of such a journey, provided that the consent of the Indian Government could be obtained. It is needless to say that, in the circumstances, I did not consider it my duty in any way to forward General Kaufmann's conciliatory proposal.

In January 1875 General Kaufmann again did me the honour to call on me and, as usual, commenced talking about Central Asia, evidently with a view to finding out what the views of Her Majesty's Government were respecting the advance of Russia in those regions. The general again made me smile (inwardly) by saying that when he talked to Englishmen on the Central Asian question, he always thought that he must appear to them as the fox in the fable, who professes the most pacific intentions when really on the point of carrying off a tempting goose,

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because, although he invariably preached peace, it was as invariably his fate to be engaged in military expeditions. He went on to say that he had never broken the peace in Central Asia until compelled by circumstances to do so, and that he had never advanced in those countries until obliged to, in order to retain the positions he already held—the old story.

His Excellency was evidently anxious to learn whether the Russian advance towards India was really regarded by England with the amount of suspicion which the British press would lead him to suppose. He also was very desirous of ascertaining whether I thought that Her Majesty's Government, notwithstanding all its pacific assurances, could be driven by the force of public opinion to resist the legitimate and unavoidable advance of the Emperor's troops. I replied that our interests in India were of such paramount importance that it was impossible for us to watch the steady progress of Russia without suspicion, adding that the recent Russian expedition up the Atrek had caused considerable uneasiness in England. I told the general that personally I was too well aware of the strength of our position in India to entertain the slightest fear of Russia, and that I could not have lived so long in his country without being equally aware of her weakness in Central Asia. General Kaufmann then said, with an air of affected innocence, that we were strong and rich in India, whereas

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Russia was weak and poor in Central Asia, and that the expedition up the Atrek, to which I had referred, was one of a 'pacific' nature, and that it only consisted of one hundred and fifty men. I did not contradict His Excellency, although I knew that one column, under General Lomakine, engaged in the expedition, had consisted of six hundred men, and that another column, which operated on his flank, had been of equal strength. The object of all General Kaufmann's remarks during this conversation was to ascertain how far Russia might advance without the interference of Great Britain.

One word with regard to the 'pacific' nature of this military expedition.

Although His Excellency had been the organiser and Commander-in-Chief of the expedition against Khiva which led to the annexation of that Khanate, it is well known that its success was due to the Orenburg column under the command of General Veriofkin, and that the troops under the immediate command of General Kaufmann played but a secondary part in the operations.

General Kaufmann felt this deeply, and immediately ordered the campaign against the Yomudes (nomad tribes), the direction of which he placed in the hands of General Golovatchoff, and in which his own troops alone were to take part, so that they should have an opportunity of distinguishing themselves at the expense of the poor helpless Yomudes, who desired nothing better

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than to live at peace with the invaders. General Kaufmann's friends endeavoured at the time to shift the blame for these barbarous proceedings from his shoulders on to those of his subordinate, General Golovatchoff, but the following will show to whom the guilt of this unnecessary, wicked bloodshed, this campaign of extermination, is really to be attributed.

In order to find an excuse for the expedition, General Kaufmann early in July 1873 decided to levy a contribution of 300,000 roubles on all the Yomudes, demanding the payment of 100,000 roubles by the 17th of the month, and that of the remainder five days later. The elders of the tribes of course promised that the contribution should be paid, and Kaufmann ordered five of them to undertake the collection of the tax, keeping twelve as hostages. The money was to be paid to the officer commanding the Turkestan division at Kazavat. In writing his instructions to General Golovatchoff, and elaborating details respecting the military measures to be taken by him in case of non-payment of the tax, General Kaufmann orders him in that event 'to march against the Yomude villages and deliver them, their houses and families, to full and complete ruin and destruction, and their property, flocks, and herds to confiscation'! Later on, in the same instructions, he alludes to the plan of campaign of the 'Division of Execution.' After suggesting plans for the complete surrounding of

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the tribes, this amiable general of 'pacific' intentions goes on to say that if, notwithstanding all precautions, the Yomudes should succeed in plunging into the desert, they and their flocks and herds would perish from want of water!

After the fall of Khiva, Count Ignatieff and others advised the Emperor that the Khanate, or at all events a portion of it, should be offered to Persia—a policy which would not only be flattering to her, but which would also show that there was more to be gained from Russia than from England.

I have, I think, now said enough to prove how necessary it is that we should continue to be on the *qui vive* in order to be prepared for all eventualities; for the proposals of the Grand Duke Michael, those of the professor with aggressive tendencies, and those of General Kaufmann undoubtedly show that there are persons in Russia who believe a successful invasion of India as quite within the region of possible, if not probable, events.

The fact that the Russians keep a large army in the Caucasus is often referred to as a standing menace to our Indian possessions by those who hug the fear of invasion, but it should be remembered that the reason for which this great army is constantly maintained there is, that the Caucasus could not be held without it.

It was, if I remember rightly, Mr. Norman, M.P., who, at the commencement of the war between

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Russia and Japan, made use of the following expression in a letter he addressed to the editor of the *Times*, 'Russia must win because she cannot afford to lose,' or words to that effect. Did it never strike this Russophil English legislator that the same thing might be said, and with infinitely more reason, with regard to Japan? For is not the Island Empire fighting for its very independence, whereas the object of Russia is aggrandisement pure and simple? Then again, General Kuropatkin in his famous manifesto to his army stated that it was the 'inflexible' will of his sovereign that the Japanese should be defeated, and that His Majesty's order would be 'inflexibly' carried out. Did it never occur to this undoubtedly able commander, that the Japanese also have a ruler whose will might be as 'inflexible' as that of the Emperor of Russia, and that Marshal Oyama's intention to obey his sovereign's orders might perhaps be as 'inflexible' as his own?

If ever the time comes—which heaven avert—that Great Britain should be at war with Russia, the Mr. Norman, M.P., and the Kuropatkin of that day will doubtless give expression to similar sentiments; but let us hope that, by that time at any rate, we shall have a Government equal to the occasion and one that will prove by deeds, not words, that its intention to safeguard our national honour is at least as inflexible as is that of any autocrat, be he who he may.

I have only seen one war, that between Russia

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and Turkey, but what I then witnessed was quite sufficient to impress me with the fearful responsibility resting on the shoulders of those who would lightly engage in such terrible enterprises. I am, however, equally convinced that a morbid fear of war, which no insult will overcome, is certain sooner or later to defeat its own object—the maintenance of peace.

In my humble opinion, our policy with regard to Russia has for the last thirty years been conducted in a manner quite unworthy of a great country. We have interfered, we have asked questions, we have snarled, and we have barked. In return we have received assurances—none of which have been adhered to. What does the recent history of Central Asia teach? Nothing—if not a continual breach of assurances solemnly made by Russia to Great Britain. What does even more recent history show with regard to Manchuria? Another series of broken undertakings. And what has been the result of all our interference, our questions, our snarling and our barking? Have we dared to bite? No; our country has swallowed every pill, the bitterest of all, not excepting the Dogger Bank outrage, being the order our Government gave to a British naval officer to slink out of Port Arthur with his two men-of-war at the behest of a Russian autocrat, an insult which we have been content to allow our splendid allies the Japanese to avenge. Can we then blame Russia for her tortuous diplomacy?

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It has paid, as far as we are concerned, and nowadays any policy appears to be correct if only it is successful. I never could understand an argument so often used by our rulers, 'Should we not think twice before embarking in war?'

Certainly we should, but if we are to think twice before going to war with Russia, how often should she think before embarking in a conflict with us?

One thing is certain, and that is that if we were not prepared to uphold our honour against Russia, by force if need be, when half her naval strength had practically been swept off the sea, and the other half was at the mercy of Lord Charles Beresford's squadron, and when, too, her military forces were tightly gripped by the armies of the Mikado in Manchuria and at Port Arthur, we shall never, at any rate in the opinion of the Russians, dare to meet her when she is at peace with the rest of the world, and circumstances are favourable to her. It is all very well for our rulers to point to the horrors now going on in the Far East, and to say, 'Would you have us go to war too?' There are horrors greater than those of war, such as constant insult and humiliation meekly accepted. The fear of Russia is to me one of those problems impossible to solve. Only the other day our ministers from their places in Parliament were soothing the minds of inquisitive members by declaring that explanations had been made to the Russian Government

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with regard to our doings in Thibet. What right had Russia to demand such explanations? And surely, if she did ask impertinent questions, it would have been more in consonance with the dignity of a great power civilly to refuse any information other than that contained in the public utterances of ministers, to which she might with all courtesy have been referred.

In my humble opinion there is only one policy to pursue with regard to Russia, and that is a policy of firmness. We should not, in order to overcome some temporary difficulty, ask questions and be satisfied with assurances which we know by experience will never be adhered to. That is a patchwork policy which must inevitably, sooner or later, lead to humiliation or war—probably the former.

If, on the other hand, our statesmen would only speak frankly and firmly to Russia, showing her, in diplomatic language of course, the limits beyond which she cannot trespass without meeting the armed forces of Great Britain, a great step would have been taken in the interests of peace.

We are, of course, very much hampered in our dealings with Russia by the exigencies of party Government. The policy of Russia is ruled by the mind of one man, namely that of the Emperor, if he is strong. If he is weak, others take the reins, but there is no parliamentary opposition to interfere with the policy adopted. With us

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it is otherwise—it is one of the penalties we pay for the blessings of a freedom unknown in 'Holy Russia.' One would have thought that in a case of such momentous importance as the policy to be pursued in regard to Russia, the leaders of the Opposition could be persuaded to meet the Government with a view to laying down the broad lines of a generous but firm policy—a policy which future Governments might fairly be expected to maintain, unless of course circumstances altered to such an extent as to render it unwise to do so, when resort might again be had to a mixed conference of Government and Opposition.

A vacillating policy such as we have just witnessed in connection with the exploits of Admiral Rojdestvensky in the North Sea can but lead to evil. I do not for a moment believe that any Russian officer will be punished, notwithstanding all the assurances which may have been or will be made, and if punishment does by chance follow the decision of the North Sea Inquiry, it will but be a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*.

We are continually being reminded by those in authority in this country that the Emperor of Russia is a man of peace, as evidenced by his being the originator of the Hague Court of Arbitration. I think it was Voltaire who blasphemously said, '*Ou bien Dieu est faible ou bien il est méchant*.' Might this not be said without blasphemy (at any rate in England), with respect

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to the Emperor of Russia? Scarcely had the idea of the Hague Tribunal been started than Russian soldiers massacred thousands of unarmed, unoffending Chinese—men, women, and children —at Blagoveschensk.

These horrors were shortly followed by the iniquitous 'Russification' of poor little Finland, whose peaceful, law-abiding people were amongst the most loyal of the Emperor's subjects. Men of all classes were imprisoned or banished simply because the Emperor, in defiance of his coronation oath, gave the word that their constitution should be taken from them, and they resented the outrage.

Then look at Poland—the massacres of the Jews, the treatment of the Armenian Church. And yet there are people to be found in this country who advocate what they call a *rapprochement* with a Government which suffers such iniquities to be perpetrated! All honour to the diplomacy which brought about the Japanese alliance, and which, we hope, has for ever dispersed the clouds which periodically threatened the friendly feelings of the French and English peoples; but that we should enter into similar relations with Russia, until she has mended her ways—God forbid.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

CONCLUSION

AFTER relinquishing my official position in St. Petersburg, I was urged by a friend, then resident in Russia, to accompany him to a so-called Nihilist dinner, which in my then status of complete freedom and no responsibility I was glad to do, not with a view to enrolment in the ranks of Nihilism, but with a desire to learn at first-hand what the aims and objects of this redoubtable conspiracy really were. My first surprise was to find how near the fashionable part of the city the house to which I was invited was situated. I had expected to be taken mysteriously by my friend to some remote suburb where nothing but squalor and crime were to be seen, whereas the dinner in reality took place within a very short distance of the house in which I lived. My next cause of astonishment were the appearance and demeanour of the men whom I had been invited to meet. I do not mean that I had expected to be introduced to shock-headed ruffians with long hair and dirty sheepskin coats, which is, I believe, the popular conception of a Nihilist conspirator, but I was certainly not prepared to be received by the quiet,

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plausible, and moderate men with whom I sat down to dinner that evening. My friend, not a Russian, was sufficient guarantee for my discretion, and the conversation was absolutely free from all restriction. There were no servants in the room, their absence being the only observable precaution against indiscretion, and we helped ourselves to the various dishes and wines, the owner of the house himself bringing everything into the room from the kitchen. My experiences of that evening were most interesting, and tended to confirm the opinion I had formed, after some years' residence in Russia, as to the political aspirations of what would in this country be called a very mildly progressive party. My hosts—for the expenses of the dinner were shared between them all—were of the upper middle class, and, with the exception of a few pardonable outbursts against the existing form of Government and its ruthless methods, nothing was said that was not based on common sense and logical argument. This meeting took place at a time when the question of England joining Turkey still trembled in the balance, and I well remember one of my next-door neighbours at the table asking me whether I thought that England would eventually be drawn into the war. 'I sincerely hope she will,' he continued, 'for, Colonel Wellesley, I desire to see Russia defeated, and we all know that if England once puts her hand to the plough she will never turn back'

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(this was before Majuba), 'and that she has the financial means to continue any struggle she may embark in. This you will think unpatriotic on my part, but, on the contrary, it is because I love my country that I wish for her present humiliation, which would inevitably lead to a future regeneration. Nothing short of such a disaster will bring the country, from the highest downwards, to realise the rottenness of the present form of Government, with its patriarchal supineness and corrupt bureaucracy.'

It must be remembered that public opinion, in our interpretation of the word, is non-existent in Russia, owing principally to the want of means of communication over the vast territories owning allegiance to the Emperor. What public opinion there is exists only in such towns as St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kieff, Kharkoff, Odessa, etc., and it is in these centres that the educated classes, knowing the blessings of such freedom as we in England enjoy, desire to obtain even a small portion of it for their own country. No enlightened Russian is foolish enough to think that the Empire is at present ripe for a constitution such as that under which we live. A parliament sitting in St. Petersburg or Moscow, with representatives from Archangel, the Pacific, Central Asia, and Poland is, of course, not to be dreamed of at present, nor does it enter into the wildest calculation of sensible Russian reformers.

It is, however, known to all, that those who

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surround the throne, Grand Dukes, ministers, generals, admirals, and others in high places, grow rich at the expense of the overtaxed people, and it is this iniquitous state of things for which the reformers seek a remedy in the shape of some sort of control over the finances of the Empire.

The great obstacle in the way of such a measure of reform is the unfortunate but frequent connection of members of the Imperial family with such abuses as have been referred to in these pages. Complete liberty of the press would, of course, in present circumstances, be impossible, inasmuch as it would lay such persons open to attack which, under an autocracy in its present form, would be most undesirable from every point of view. Such a reform could only be introduced by degrees, and with great caution. A step in the right direction, however, would be liberty of the press except so far as the Imperial family is concerned, which, in conjunction with the libel laws, would enable the press to ventilate suspected cases of corruption and peculation on the part of officials, however highly placed. Persons thus attacked would have a remedy at law should they be unjustly accused. A voice in the expenditure of public money, limited freedom of the press, such as I have suggested, together with the total abolition of justice by 'administrative process,' which now completely overrides trial by jury, would, in my opinion, completely satisfy the present aspirations of all reasonable reformers. I honestly believe

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that were the Emperor of Russia to give such an earnest as these reforms would be of a sincere desire to ameliorate the condition of his subjects, he would be able to show himself in public without the escort and crowd of detectives by whom he is now perpetually surrounded, and to emancipate himself from that atmosphere of mystery in which his every movement is at present enveloped, a state of affairs which can in no way add to the dignity of the Crown.

A new era may indeed be dawning for Russia with the appointment of Prince Sviatopolk Mirski as Minister of the Interior, but I fear that the reactionary intriguers who surround the sovereign will be too strong for him. The first act of a powerful reformer should be the total abolition of the inquisitorial department of the secret police which used to be called 'La Troisième Section,' the seat of 'Administrative Justice'—an institution which renders the happiness, freedom, and even the lives of the Emperor's subjects dependent on the caprice of Bobrikoffs, Plehves, and their like. I believe that this department has changed its name, but as the rose by any other name would smell as sweet, so would this tyrannical branch of the administration stink in the nostrils of every self-respecting Russian by whatever other name it might be called.

It must be remembered that Russian officials are not content to class as Nihilists such desperate men as the murderers of Bobrikoff and Plehve

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(to whose deeds the term 'methods of barbarism' is more appropriate than it was to those of our poor British soldiers fighting for their country), but they include in the same denomination all those whose only crime it is to crave for a mere fraction of that freedom which every Englishman regards as his right by inheritance.

THE END

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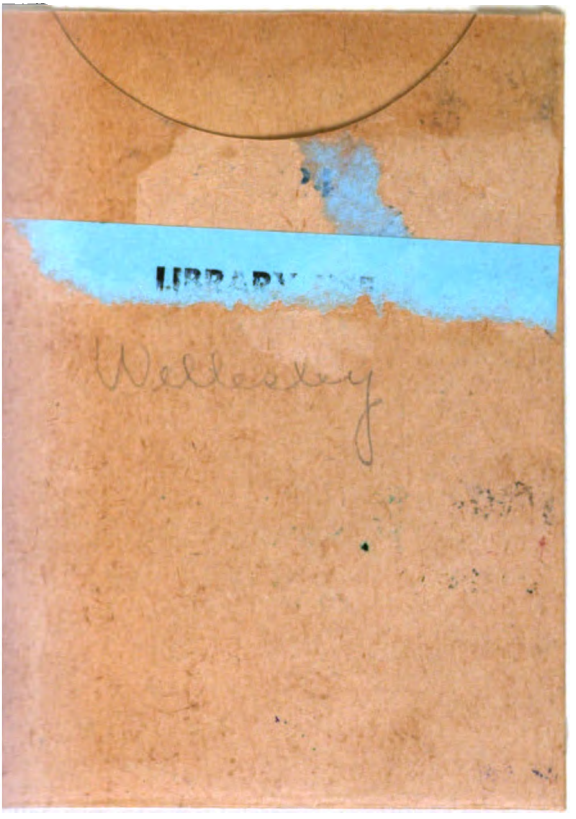

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